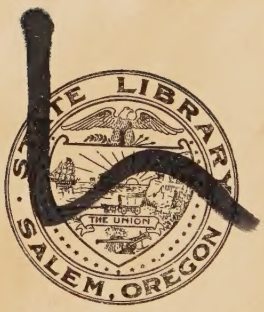
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THE GREAT ENGLISH LETTER-WRITERS

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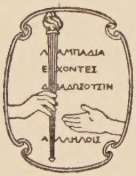
LIGHTS OF LITERATURE

THE GREAT ENGLISH LETTER-WRITERS

WITH INTRODUCTORY
ESSAYS AND NOTES

BY
WILLIAM J. DAWSON
AND
CONINGBSBY W. DAWSON

VOL. II

WITHDRAWN
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PREFACE

THE purpose of The Reader's Library is to present in succinct form a survey of English literature. The method adopted is to assemble under generic titles the best specimens of the various branches of literature, in such a way that each volume shall be of equal service to the scholar and the general reader.

The first two volumes of the series, The Great English Letter-Writers, are now presented to the public. The selections have been carefully arranged, with a view not to chronological order so much as to the illustration of the growth of the art of letter-writing. The object of the editors has been to present what may be called a pageant-view of their theme: to show how various men and women, scattered through different ages, have borne themselves under the same crises of emotion or action. That which is obviously lost in abandoning a strictly chronological arrangement is recaptured in the introductory essays to each volume, which aim at a general historic survey of the art of letter-writing, together with a critical estimate of the writers, and of their relationship to the literature of their age. Biographical details concerning these writers are contained in the body of the volume.

Where a subject cannot be adequately treated in one volume, as is the case with The Great Letter-Writers, each volume contains a separate essay, so that it may be, as far as is possible, complete in itself.

The reader is referred to the general prospectus of the series for the plan of the entire work. Among the volumes now near completion are The Great English Essayists, The Great English Historians, and The Great English Nature-Lovers. The method adopted in the present volumes will be pursued in all succeeding volumes.

It will be noticed, no doubt, that some letter-writers of great eminence are not as adequately represented as could be wished. The reason for this inadequate representation is found in the difficulties which are involved in copyright matter. The gratitude of the editors is due, and is hereby expressed, to many publishers and authors, who have generously granted a very liberal use of copyright material. In some instances, however, the use of such material has been strictly limited.

Every care has been taken to discover the holders of copyright, and to print nothing without express permission. In some cases, however, the editors have been unable to trace the owner. Should any letter be found in these volumes for which permission should have been gained, the editors beg to state that the error is not wilful, and they offer their apologies to the undiscovered owners of the copyright.

To the following publishers and authors, who have extended their courtesy to the Editors, by allowing the use of copyright material contained in these two volumes, a word of grateful acknowledgment is due:—To Messrs. G. P. Putnam's Sons for Mr. and Mrs. Borrow's letter, from Professor Knapp's *Life of Borrow,* copyright 1899; to Messrs. Dodd, Mead & Company for the correspondence of Charlotte Brontë, from Mr. Clement K. Shorter's *The Brontës and Their Circle,* copyright 1896; to Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Company for the letters of Elizabeth and Robert Browning, from Mrs. Sutherland Orr's

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The Art and Attainment of English Letter-Writing

OF the many forms of literature, letter-writing is probably the oldest, as it is certainly the most intimate and sincere. This alone should ensure for it respect, yet upon the whole that respect has not been accorded, probably because some suspicion lingers in the minds even of acute critics that it is at best but an inferior and subsidiary form of literature.

Very little consideration is needed, however, to dispel this suspicion. To write a really good letter requires a combination of qualities at once rare in themselves and rarer still in their conjunction. Thus the writer must himself be interesting, and have interesting matter to communicate; he must be something of an egoist, to whom his own sensations are noticeable, and worthy of notice; he must possess both daring and freedom, for the last place where caution and reticence are required is in the familiar epistle; he must be resolutely sincere, for the moment he begins to pose his magic wand is broken, and he becomes tedious and offensive; he must above all possess the intimate note, for without it he will produce an essay, but not a letter. Of all these qualities perhaps the last is the rarest, for a good letter is really a page from the secret memoirs of a man. It may be a memoir of ideas or of events; it does not greatly matter which, so long as it contributes to our knowledge of the man. For this is the first aim of a true letter, self-revelation. In many forms of lit-

erature self-revelation is the last thing that is to be expected; in most it would be a disturbing and offensive element. We do not need it in the historian; we need it only partially in the essayist; even in poetry, especially of the epic kind, it is not always wanted; but in a letter we want this, and nothing less than this. The man who is not prepared to unlock his heart to us can never write a great letter.

It is recorded of various artists and writers that they imagined they worked better if they approached their task in the dignity of full dress; slovenly attire seemed incompatible with dignified expression. There are certain books which undoubtedly suggest the element of elaborate decorum, but letters suggest something of the very opposite. In them the author appears in undress. He may be pictured lounging at a tavern table, sitting in a green arbour, rounding off the day beside a study fire, his studious and public self forgotten, the pose demanded by his public laid aside, the natural man alone apparent, and speaking in the accent of fearless and unrestrained vivacity. He who writes for the public must needs keep the public in his eye; spectral reviewers throng around his table, critics watch for his misdemeanours, and he writes amid the rustle of a thousand journals and reviews. But the loud potentialities of publicity do not disturb the genuine letter-writer. He writes to gratify himself and please a friend; he has no more notorious object in view. Were he the most famous of authors, for the time he must become a mere private person; and unless he be capable of this spirit of detachment and divestiture, he will never write a genuine letter. This is why George Eliot's letters are dull and Matthew Arnold's letters stiff; they cannot forget that they are public personages. This is also why men so radically separate as Walpole and FitzGerald write with such an easy charm; they either despise or forget the existence of the public, and are

intent upon nothing loftier than pleasant gossip about themselves, their opinions and their prejudices, their tastes and their employments. The world loves good gossip, which is after all the staple of all good conversation; and the letter-writer is a conversationalist who does not object to being overheard.

If we bear these distinctions in mind, we shall be able to distinguish what really constitutes a good letter. In the preparation of this volume many hundreds of books have been sedulously winnowed for material, often with surprisingly poor results, even in the case of the greatest authors. Thus, for example, the biography of Charles Kingsley is a charming book, and since it consists in the main of extracts from his voluminous correspondence, one would have imagined that it was the easiest thing in the world to gather from it a large sheaf of interesting letters. Nothing of the kind has happened for the simple reason that in his most private hours Kingsley is never quite able to forget his relations with the public. He writes much, he writes well, and it argues an immense fund of good nature that he should have poured out his powers so fully in correspondence with his friends; but because he is always conscious of his mission he produces not letters so much as elaborate treatises and essays. Mrs. Carlyle, on the contrary, can make us more interested in her finger's ache than Kingsley in his most brilliant discussions of socialism and theology. It is the personal note we miss in Kingsley; it is nothing but the personal note that we have in Mrs. Carlyle. And as it was with Kingsley, so it has been with many greater men; they have had just enough egoism to make them conscious of the public, but not enough to make them forget it. Even Ruskin rarely attains this art. He, like Kingsley, was a correspondent of tireless industry, but more often than not his letters are moral or æsthetic dis-

sertations with a name and an adieu tacked on. The very first paragraph, with its exquisite balance and antithesis, undeceives us as to the true nature of all that follows. We know that the friend to whom these brilliant paragraphs are addressed is after all a wooden horse in whose belly a printing-press lies concealed.

Among the earliest letter-writers of English literature the distinction between the essay and the letter was not very carefully preserved. Addison's essays, for example, are in reality extended letters; and it may be argued that the modern essay, which began with Addison, owes its origin to the epistolary art. The essay, nevertheless, soon took its own form, and became homiletic. It had a definite theme, and was a dissertation upon that theme. So popular was this form of literature that for a long time the value of the letter was overlooked, and its peculiar characteristics were forgotten. Alexander Pope did much to re-establish the letter in popular esteem by the publication of a series of epistles which at once took the taste of the town. Among his contemporaries was Lady Mary Montagu, who recognised in the letter a form of literary expression which precisely suited her rapid and wayward pen. No travel-letters have ever been more brilliant and vivacious than hers. To the same period belongs Horace Walpole. Walpole was a man curiously before his age in many things. He was the first exponent of the new romantic impulse which later on produced Scott and the Waverley Novels, the revival of Gothic architecture and Gilbert Scott, the Oxford Movement and Newman, the Æsthetic movement and Ruskin. Horace Walpole despised literature as a profession, and being himself in receipt of a handsome income from the public treasury had no occasion to practise it. Yet he was conscious of the "irritation of the idea"—as Flaubert puts it, which is the source of all

literary expression. To a man so constituted and circumstanced the familiar letter afforded just that mode of literary expression which was best suited to his genius. He was by temperament and habit a keen critic of life. He was indefatigably curious. He would rise at midnight to look upon a fire. He would hasten to Temple Bar and gaze through a telescope at the blood-stained heads of the rebel lords, as eager for a new sensation as the most vulgar of the crowd. He had the quickest and the keenest eye for foibles and defects in others. He was the master of a pen at once lucid and caustic. How could such a pen be better used than in the semi-confidential epistle? He was too indolent to write history and too indifferent to reward to attempt the serious essay. But in the letter he found the exact medium that suited him. Here he could say what he would, he could record his impressions with vividness, he could be as brilliantly malicious as he chose, without fear of contradiction. Things which no sober historian, conscious of the judgment of posterity, would have dared to write, he writes. He comments on the gaudy slovenliness of the Lady Mary Montagu, her eccentric dress, her pasty complexion, and her oily hair. He pictures Wesley as a lean-faced man, as palpably an actor as Garrick. He never mentions Lord North except to make him appear ridiculous. His one serious pursuit in life was to build, extend, alter, and adorn his mock-Gothic castle at Strawberry Hill; and yet is it so little serious that he often mocks his own endeavours with caustic raillery. Yet, with all these defects, and perhaps because of them, he made himself the most brilliant letter-writer of his time. He did more than this, for he vindicated the place of the letter in literature, by making it a mirror held up to his time, in which we see, as in a magic crystal, all the plots, intrigues, and follies of the great, with occasional prophetic glimpses of those un-

derlying forces which were working out a new and nobler age.

There is, however, one defect about the letters of both Lady Montagu and Horace Walpole; they obviously assume publication. In the case of Lady Montagu, no doubt on this head is possible. She goes so far as to instruct her correspondents to preserve her letters. The result is that that element of spontaneity, which is the most charming feature of the genuine letter, is sometimes wanting. When the writer of a letter becomes conscious of the literary worth of his production, the perfume of intimacy is lost.

We turn therefore to another kind of letter, which is the genuine unpremeditated outpouring of confidential friendship. Letters of this description may be found in the biographies of most distinguished persons. It is characteristic of the small practitioner in letters that he is jealously parsimonious concerning his ideas, because he has few to spare. He will not give away the merest sweepings of his workshop for fear that some stray grain of gold may be discovered in them. But the great writer has so large a treasure that he never thinks of economy. Nothing is more surprising than to discover what a wealth of ideas is scattered in the correspondence of men of genius. Keats will enclose verses that have since become immortal in letters which he writes to persons whose chief significance is that he loved them. His letters contain rough drafts of all the philosophic ideas on which his life and art were built; and as the first rapid sketch of a great artist has often more fire and virility than the elaborated picture, so these rough drafts of Keats have the brilliant effervescence of a genius in its first miraculous freshness and prodigal activity. Dickens—to take a type of mind absolutely different—is equally lavish. His letters are full of pictures of life, finished with as careful an art as the greatest passages of his writings, and

overflowing with a humour which is often much more natural and vivacious. And, to take a yet more modern instance, the same thing is true of Stevenson; so true, indeed, that there is serious ground for the conclusion that his letters will be treasured and remembered when all his stories, and all but a select dozen of his essays are forgotten. Were any vindication needed of the high importance of the letter as a form of literature, such a statement as this, if it be accepted, should carry decisive conviction with it.

But quite apart from the degree of literary art which may or may not be found in a letter, there is the value which attaches to it as a revelation of personality. Many forms of literature, as we have seen, do not demand this element. We may go further, and say that they are hostile to it. The man who is definitely writing for the public is always conscious of the restraint put upon his personality by the conditions of his task. He is writing for a dim host of people whose multiplied idiosyncrasies he does not understand, with whose view of life he has but partial acquaintance and sympathy, whose tastes and opinions he may have reason to fear, to placate, or to make allowance for. Every writer is aware of a multitude of cross-currents that deflect his aim when he addresses an unknown public. It often seems as though some wayward sprite sits upon his pen, and forces him to write something that is not at all in accordance with his real thought. The most humiliating pain of authorship is this disparity between intention and achievement. It would almost seem as if, with the best intentions to use words to express thought, they have after all been used only to conceal it; and the sensitive writer, when he comes to read his own printed page, is dismally aware that it is quite perversely unlike the thought and sentiment which first welled up in his mind

and drove him to literary expression. What he does not see is that this deflection of aim, this loss of the essential spirit of utterance, is in the main due to the disturbing sense that he is addressing a multitude of unseen and unknown auditors.

But when he addresses a single auditor, who is known, loved, and trusted, this embarrassment at once disappears. He can not only afford to be confidential and spontaneous, but in the nature of the thing he must be nothing less than this. The result is not only the free revelation of personality, but often a corresponding release of literary power. This is a characteristic very obvious and marked in Stevenson. From the mere literary point of view his letters are in many instances superior to anything that may be found in his tales and essays. His phrases have a sharp-edged natural brilliance; they come fresh and hot from the mint of his imagination; they are free from the artifice which characterises similar phrases in the essays, and are by so much the more convincing and impressive. No man ever used various forms of literary expression with such a consistent aim to express himself. No modern writer has succeeded so well. Yet when we read his tales and essays we are able to see very clearly how partial the success was even at the best; but while in his deliberate writings the suspicion of artifice is never wholly conquered, in the letters there is the essential artist, instinctive, natural, triumphantly flexible and at ease.

And this leads to a reflection that goes deeper still, viz., that in no way is a man so likely to be truly known as in his familiar letters. A single letter may often express the nature and spirit of a great man much more effectually than the best biography. We have an admirable instance of this in the brief but exquisite letter addressed by Abraham Lincoln to Mrs. Bixby of Boston, who had lost five

sons in the Civil War. "I pray," he writes, "that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom." No one needs to be told how great and noble was the soul from which that sentence came; by some incommunicable subtlety of feeling we realise the man, in all his own slow martyrdom, his patience, resoluteness, courage, and infinite tenderness of heart, in all the rarity and holiness of his own spirit; and we do this much more perfectly than by the reading of a hundred state documents and speeches, although in each one of these there may be discovered some impress of his personality.

A letter such as this, hastily written no doubt under the immense pressure and anxiety of public affairs, does much to reassure us that the epistolary art is not the fugitive and superseded art which many critics would have us suppose. There is no doubt some truth in the contention that the age of letter-writing is over; but such a verdict needs much qualification. What is meant probably is that the conditions of modern life are such that there is neither the time nor the occasion for the elaborate letter. Where men lived far apart, and the means of communication were expensive, they naturally did not write to one another unless they had something to communicate that seemed worth while. And because they had leisure they were able to write fully and at length. These conditions are not likely to return. No man would waste his time to-day in writing to a friend a detailed account of public events which he might be quite sure had already reached his correspondent in the morning paper. The busy man will write as little as he can on any subject; he will use the telephone and typewriter; and never yet was there a letter of any value dictated to an

obedient machine. But this after all is only one phase of life. There are still sequestered and serene existences whose chief traffic is in ideas, affections, and emotions. Women especially are, as a rule, excellent letter-writers, because they live in their emotions. I will hazard the statement, that were I to publish a selection from the letters I have received during the last twenty years from persons whose names are totally unknown to the general public, I could produce a volume not much inferior in interest and art to the present volume. The reason for this excellence lies in the fact that the letter is and must remain the best possible vehicle for the transmission of emotion. Given a moderate command of language, a quick eye, a thoughtful mind, and a warm heart, and any person of intelligence can produce an excellent letter. For the chief thing after all which is necessary is not elaborate leisure, but character; not the training of the skilled writer but the pressure of a real thought; not leisure, but the power of a deep emotion such as Lincoln felt when he wrote to Mrs. Bixby. As long as men love, the art of letter-writing will remain.

With matters such as these we are not however greatly concerned. Our present concern is with those specimens of published epistles which justify letter-writing as a fine art. It is always a somewhat perilous thing to attempt rigid categories and characterisations, yet the following distinctions may prove useful.

Keats may be taken as the best representative of what may be called inspired letter-writing. He is in his letters, as in his poems, "of imagination all compact." He has little or no relation with the world in its sordid and habitual aspects. He is detached from it and above it, and he fills us with the sense of freedom and release. He never stirs far from his Dream-garden, which lies midway between

waking and sleeping, where such things as Time, and Space, and Change have lost their exactitudes; where man may out-distance his destiny, and live the life of the spirit, unconscious of the flesh. The real greatness of Keats is but partially revealed in his poetry. To understand the height and measure of his nature a study of his letters is compulsory; there only do we comprehend the grounds for the verdict of Tennyson that "Keats was the greatest of us all."

Very different from Keats is Carlyle, whose letters really belong to the confessional realm of literature. He knows the world in all its sordidness, and he accuses it. But he knows himself with even more piercing vision, and he accuses himself the more bitterly. For him the world is no Dream-garden; it is a battlefield where the fight is almost lost, the day far spent, and he himself impotent either to turn the tide of battle or, like Joshua, to stay the sinking sun. He is a man in pain, and pain makes him prophetic. Yet there are moments of calm wisdom, when he sees to the centre of things; more exquisite moments still when his whole heart is softened and overflowed by tenderness. It would be temerarious to say of Carlyle, as of Stevenson, that he may be best remembered by his letters, for his range of literary achievement is much vaster and more memorable. But his letters, nevertheless, are his true memoir; they exhibit his art at its finest, and have a delicacy and beauty of style often lacking in his larger efforts. To the mendacity of biographers who did not understand him, and the malice of a world of little men, curious to unveil his weaknesses, his spirit, if it still beholds the stage of Time, can afford to be indifferent; for he has left his true memorial in his epistles, and in these alone is the real man enshrined.

Charles Lamb has a place apart in the history of letter-writing. For forty years he was a tireless correspondent,

his first published letter being addressed to Coleridge in 1796, and his last to Mrs. Dyer in 1834. In the four hundred and seventeen letters of Lamb which are included by Canon Ainger in his two volumes, we have every species of epistle; the grave and the gay, the pathetic and the absurd; letters that are the merest whimsies, letters that contain treasures of admirable thought and criticism, letters that touch upon the deepest and the saddest things of life. In all there is the same inimitable charm which we find in the Essays of Elia. If any fault can be found with these letters it is that they are too like the essays, and often are indeed the first drafts of the essays. The Dissertation on Roast Pig appears first in a letter to Coleridge, and his account of Dyer was the matter of a letter before it was worked up into an essay. It is because the letter so often approximates to the essay that Lamb frequently fails in the highest attributes of the letter-writer. We have wit, fancy, imagination, but they are too conscious of themselves; it is only in the really private letter, written in some hour of acute distress, that Lamb reveals himself with entire sincerity. Perhaps the best description of his letters, as a whole, would be Literary letters.

Edward FitzGerald and Stevenson represent the letter as a means of conversation. FitzGerald gossips pleasantly about himself, his tastes, opinions, and surroundings, much as a man might do with a familiar friend. His are pre-eminently the letters of Friendship. He has retained the child-like nature, and is therefore joyous and tranquil. The impression which he makes is of an English meadow, starred with daffodils which shift and glitter in an Easter wind beside a slow midland river, which runs without sound to a sea whose mysterious heart-throb is heard at long intervals. The voice of FitzGerald has no piercing accent in it; it is in tune with the soft tranquillity of nature; but it

soothes, and it releases the spirit in bondage to the world. One can understand how it was that Thackeray said that of all his friends, "Old Fitz" was the one he had loved the best. Perhaps also among all the letters of our age, these are those which men will love most; and no finer tribute can be paid to them.

Stevenson's letters are also letters of conversation, but of a much gayer and more nimble quality. If FitzGerald suggests the placid midland river, he suggests the rapid Highland stream, clear, loudly vocal, sparklingly vivacious, tossing up rainbows as it passes, shouting and singing in abandonment of mirth, yet also with its deep still pools in which eternal things hang reflected. He is too acute, too restless, too conscious of himself for more than brief intimacy; a companion on the road rather than an intimate of the hearthstone. His mission is to stimulate; we walk more cheerfully the moment we are of his company. He has a rare power of making ordinary things seem pleasant and original. He treats life as an adventure, and he makes us breathe the atmosphere of courage, expanse, and world-wideness in which he moves. And in all, the sense of personality is so strong that we lose the consciousness of any barrier of writing between ourselves and him; it is rather the magic of real speech he casts upon us, as though he talked to us alone.

To these great names one more may be added, which is relatively unknown, that of James Smetham. Smetham was an artist with a true poetic sense, as those know who, like myself, have seen his pictures. He was the friend of Rossetti, who truly appreciated his work; but for various reasons Smetham was unable to make his art popular. His life was therefore a long struggle against disappointment and poverty, and this failure of the outward life threw him back upon the inward. Happy indeed the man

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who has a "city of the mind" to which he can retire, as Smetham did, when the outward world offered no hospitality. There he found release and renewal, and his letters are the record of this inner life. They are full of fine thought, exquisitely expressed, with occasional passages of imagination which have all the charm of poetry; they exhibit throughout a nature of rare gentleness, patience, and equipoise. They are in the first rank of Intellectual letters; letters that is which express thought. This does not imply that he exceeds either Carlyle or Keats in intellect; but merely that his life is more exclusively inward than theirs. He lives in the mind only; and mind conquers for him his worldly failures, atones for them, and enables him to be triumphantly resigned. He is always sane and logical, never drunk with sensation as Keats is, never bitter as Carlyle is; he has reached "the quiet seats above the thunder," from which he sees the world and its loud strife as something far below him and of no importance. Hence, even more than FitzGerald, he conveys the impression of serenity, but it is of a different quality; FitzGerald is at home with the world, Smetham has conquered it.

That so much can be said of a man who is even yet almost unknown to discriminating readers suggests a final thought. We speak confidently of great letter-writers, but how can we be sure that there are not far greater whose work is unknown to us? That a letter should be preserved at all argues not only something worthy or remarkable in it, but also some distinction in the writer, which gives prestige and value to his letter. But how often have the greatest men moved among their contemporaries unremarked, or at least unrecognised in the special rarity of their endowment? What would we not give for a packet of the familiar letters of Shakespeare? Such letters he must have written, but because none of his contemporaries

knew the real measure of his genius, no one thought it worth while to preserve his epistles. Thus it may well happen that the greatest of all letter-writers have passed out of the world unrecognised, and have left no memorial. A thousand letters, nay a thousand thousand, which have perhaps recorded the pathos and the tragedy of life more poignantly than "Hamlet" or "In Memoriam," have been read casually, put into a drawer, and forgotten, and finally cast into the fire upon some change of circumstance. It is merely by an accident that a thing so fugitive as a letter, committed as it is to the insecure custody of a single individual who may prove careless or inappreciative, survives at all; but for the one accident that redeems it from oblivion, there are a hundred others that are only too likely to destroy it. For the epistolary art is very delicate and shy; it is like the little arbutus flower, which comes to its perfection of purity and perfume beneath the snow and out of sight; and it often withers and dies before any human eye has learned its worth.

So then, the finest letters of all may be those which have perished, or those kept in jealous privacy, or those which are too sacred for open knowledge. And the letters which the world knows and values may be after all but a scanty tithe from a rich field whose full harvest has long since been dispersed. This thought is sufficient to humble the pretensions of a categorical criticism, and to make the authoritative note impossible. The most that we dare to say is not that we have collected in one sheaf of excellence the best letters in English literature, but only the best we know; and that while the student may discover better in certain hidden by-ways of biography, here, at least, are those which do faithfully represent those elements which sustain the claim that letter-writing is an art, and fine letter-writing one of the rarest arts of literature.

I

By-Gone Lovers

The pleasing transport.

Richard Steele (1672-1729)

An old world courtship.

Lady Mary Montagu (1689-1762)

A rustic tragedy.

Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

"What a dishclout of a soul hast thou made of me!"

Laurence Sterne (1713-1768)

A letter which was never sent.

Lord Byron (1788-1824)

The love of a poet.

John Keats (1795-1821)

Its sequel.

John Keats (1795-1821)
Joseph Severn (1793-1879)
William Haslam (dates unknown)

The aftermath.

Leigh Hunt (1784-1859)
Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

Mazzini is beloved by a Jewish lady.

Jane Welsh Carlyle (1801-1866)

Deceived in her birthday letter.

Jane Welsh Carlyle (1801-1866)

Learning to love.

Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855)

Defending her union with Mr. George H. Lewes.

George Eliot (1819-1880)

The Pleasing Transport

Dick Steele to his Molly

Smith Street, Westminster, 1707.

Madam,—I lay down last night with your image in my thoughts, and have awak'd this morning in the same contemplation. The pleasing transport with which I'me delighted, has a sweetnesse in it attended with a train of ten thousand soft desires, anxieties, and cares; the day arises on my hopes with new brightnesse; youth, beauty and innocence are the charming objects that steal me from myself, and give me joys above the reach of ambition, pride or glory. Believe me, fair one, to throw myself at your feet is giving my self the highest blisse I know on Earth. Oh hasten ye minutes! bring on the happy morning wherein to be ever her's will make me look down on thrones! Dear Molly, I am tenderly, passionately, faithfully thine,

Richard Steele.

An Old World Courtship

Lady Mary Montagu to Mr. Wortley Montagu, her husband to be.[1]

I

March 28, 1710.

Give me leave to say it (I know it sounds vain), I know how to make a man of sense happy; but then that man

[1] Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was the daughter of Evelyn Pierrepont, Esq., who afterwards became the Duke of Kingston. Her brilliant mental parts first attracted the attention of her future husband when she was but fourteen years of age. He was very much her senior. A correspondence grew up between

must resolve to contribute something towards it himself. I have so much esteem for you, I should be very sorry to hear you was unhappy; but for the world I would not be the instrument of making you so; which (of the humour you are) is hardly to be avoided if I am your wife. You distrust me—I can neither be easy, nor loved, where I am distrusted. Nor do I believe your passion for me is what you pretend it; at least I am sure was I in love I could not talk as you do. Few women would have spoken so plainly as I have done; but to dissemble is among the things I never do. I take more pains to approve my conduct to myself than to the world; and would not have to accuse myself of a minute's deceit. I wish I loved you enough to devote myself to be forever miserable, for the pleasure of a day or two's happiness. I cannot resolve upon it. You must think otherwise of me, or not at all.

I don't enjoin you to burn this letter. I know you will. 'Tis the first I ever writ to one of your sex, and shall be the last. You must never expect another. I resolve against all correspondence of the kind; my resolutions are seldom made, and never broken.

herself and Miss Anne Wortley, Mr. Wortley Montagu's sister, wherein she repeatedly asked for guidance in her studies, criticism and advice, answers to which questions it fell to the lot of the brother to dictate. After the death of Anne, the letters passed to Mr. Wortley Montagu direct. An affection sprang up, and matters were finally settled between the lovers; all that remained was a request for the lady's father's consent. The Marquis of Dorchester, as he had now become, conditioned his approval with a form of settlement to which Mr. Wortley Montagu refused to agree. Matters were at a halt. In Lady Mary's twenty-fourth year, her father chose out for her another suitor with whom he insisted she should wed. She appealed to Mr. Wortley Montagu, who settled the difficulty by eloping in her company. They were married August, 1712.

II

[Postmark *April* 25, 1710.]

One part of my character is not so good, nor t'other so bad, as you fancy it. Should we ever live together, you would be disappointed both ways; you would find an easy equality of temper you do not expect, and a thousand faults you do not imagine. You think, if you married me, I should be passionately fond of you one month, and of somebody else the next: neither would happen. I can esteem, I can be a friend, but I don't know whether I can love. Expect all that is complaisant and easy, but never what is fond, in me. You judge very wrong of my heart, when you suppose me capable of views of interest, and that anything could oblige me to flatter any body. Was I the most indigent creature in the world, I should answer you as I do now, without adding or diminishing. I am incapable of art, and 'tis because I will not be capable of it. Could I deceive one minute, I should never regain my own good opinion; and who could bear to live with one they despised?

If you can resolve to live with a companion that will have all the deference due to your superiority of good sense, and that your proposals can be agreeable to those on whom I depend, I have nothing to say against them.

As to travelling, 'tis what I should do with great pleasure, and could easily quit London upon your account; but a retirement in the country is not so disagreeable to me, as I know a few months would make it tiresome to you. Where people are tied for life, 'tis their mutual interest not to grow weary of one another. If I had all the personal charms that I want, a face is too slight a foundation for happiness. You would be soon tired with seeing every day the same thing. Where you saw nothing else, you

would have leisure to remark all the defects; which would increase in proportion as the novelty lessened, which is always a great charm. I should have the displeasure of seeing a coldness, which, though I could not reasonably blame you for, being involuntary, yet it would render me uneasy; and the more, because I know a love may be revived which absence, inconstancy, or even infidelity, has extinguished; but there is no returning from a *dégoût* given by satiety.

III

[About *November*, 1710.]

Indeed I do not at all wonder that absence, and variety of new faces, should make you forget me; but I am a little surprized at your curiosity to know what passes in my heart (a thing wholly insignificant to you), except you propose to yourself a piece of ill-natured satisfaction, in finding me very much disquieted. Pray which way would you see into my heart? You can frame no guesses about it from either my speaking or writing; and, supposing I should attempt to show it you, I know no other way.

I begin to be tired of my humility: I have carried my complaisances to you farther than I ought. You make new scruples; you have a great deal of fancy; and your distrusts being all of your own making, are more immovable than if there was some real ground for them. Our aunts and grandmothers always tell us that men are a sort of animals, that, if ever they are constant, 'tis only where they are ill used. 'Twas a kind of paradox I could never believe: experience has taught me the truth of it. You are the first I ever had a correspondence with, and I thank God I have done with it for all my life. You needed not to have told me you are not what you have been: one must be stupid not to find a difference in your letters. You seem,

in one part of your last, to excuse yourself from having done me any injury in point of fortune. Do I accuse you of any?

I have not spirits to dispute any longer with you. You say you are not yet determined: let me determine for you, and save you the trouble of writing again. Adieu for ever! make no answer. I wish, among the variety of acquaintance, you may find some one to please you; and can't help the vanity of thinking, should you try them all, you won't find one that will be so sincere in their treatment, though a thousand more deserving, and every one happier. 'Tis a piece of vanity and injustice I never forgive in a woman, to delight to give pain; what must I think of a man that takes pleasure in making me uneasy? After the folly of letting you know it is in your power, I ought in prudence to let this go no farther, except I thought you had good nature enough never to make use of that power. I have no reason to think so: however, I am willing, you see, to do you the highest obligation 'tis possible for me to do; that is, to give you a fair occasion of being rid of me.

IV

Tuesday night [*August*, 1712].

If we marry, our happiness must consist in loving one another: 'tis principally my concern to think of the most probable method of making that love eternal. You object against living in London; I am not fond of it myself, and readily give it up to you; though I am assured there needs more art to keep a fondness alive in solitude, where it generally preys upon itself. There is one article absolutely necessary—to be ever beloved, one must be ever agreeable. There is no such thing as being agreeable, without a thorough good humour, a natural sweetness of temper, en-

livened by cheerfulness. Whatever natural fund of gaiety one is born with, 'tis necessary to be entertained with agreeable objects. Anybody, capable of tasting pleasure, when they confine themselves to one place, should take care 'tis the place in the world the most pleasing. Whatever you may now think (now, perhaps, you have some fondness for me), though your love should continue in its full force, there are hours when the most beloved mistress would be troublesome. People are not [for] ever (nor is it in human nature they should be) disposed to be fond; you would be glad to find in me the friend and the companion. To be agreeably this last, it is necessary to be gay and entertaining. A perpetual solitude, in a place where you see nothing to raise your spirits, at length wears them out, and conversation insensibly falls into dull and insipid. When I have no more to say to you, you will like me no longer. How dreadful is that view! You will reflect for my sake you have abandoned the conversation of a friend that you liked, and your situation in a country where all things would have contributed to make your life pass in (the true *volupté*) a smooth tranquillity. *I* shall lose the vivacity that should entertain you, and you will have nothing to recompense you for what you have lost. Very few people that have settled entirely in the country, but have grown at length weary of one another. The lady's conversation generally falls into a thousand impertinent effects of idleness; and the gentleman falls *in* love with his dogs and horses, and *out* of love with everything else. I am not now arguing in favour of the town; you have answered me as to that point. In respect of your health, 'tis the first thing to be considered, and I shall never ask you to do anything injurious to that. But 'tis my opinion, 'tis necessary, to being happy, that we neither of us think any place more agreeable than that where we are.

V

Friday night [15th *Aug.*, 1712].

I tremble for what we are doing.—Are you sure you will love me for ever? Shall we never repent? I fear and I hope. I foresee all that will happen on this occasion. I shall incense my family in the highest degree. The generality of the world will blame my conduct, and the relations and friends of —— will invent a thousand stories of me; yet, 'tis possible, you may recompense everything to me. In this letter, which I am fond of, you promise me all that I wish. Since I writ so far, I received your Friday letter. I will be only yours, and I will do what you please.

You shall hear from me again to-morrow, not to contradict, but to give some directions. My resolution is taken. Love me and use me well.

A Rustic Tragedy

Alexander Pope to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

September 1 [1717].

I have a mind to fill the rest of this paper with an accident that happened just under my eyes, and has made a great impression upon me. I have just passed part of this summer at an old romantic seat of Lord Harcourt's, which he lent me.[1] It overlooks a common field, where,

[1] In 1737, Pope published, by subscription, a volume of letters between himself and his literary friends. Part of the collection had been previously issued by Curll, the notorious publisher of that day, to whom Pope had, by the agency of other parties, conveyed an edition privately printed. Having induced Curll to advertise the volume as containing letters of certain noblemen, the publisher was summoned before the House of Lords for breach of privilege. When it was examined, it was found to contain no single letter from any nobleman; therefore Curll was dismissed. Pope now made this his excuse for putting forth a genu-

under the shade of a haycock, sat two lovers, as constant as ever were found in romance, beneath a spreading beech. The name of the one—let it sound as it will—was John Hewett; of the other, Sarah Drew. John was a well-set man about five-and-twenty; Sarah, a brown woman of eighteen. John had for several months borne the labour of the day in the same field with Sarah; when she milked it was his morning and evening charge to bring the cows to her pail. Their love was the talk, but not the scandal, of the whole neighbourhood; for all they aimed at was the blameless possession of each other in marriage. It was but this very morning that he had obtained her parents' consent, and it was but till the next week that they were to wait to be happy. Perhaps this very day, in the intervals of their work, they were talking of their wedding clothes; and John was now matching several kinds of poppies and field-flowers to her complexion, to make her a present of knots for the day. While they were thus employed—it was on the last of July—a terrible storm of thunder and lightning arose, that drove the labourers to what shelter the trees or hedges afforded. Sarah, frightened and out of breath, sunk on a haycock, and John—who never separated from her—sat by her side, having raked two or three heaps together to secure her. Imme-

ine collection, having by these means secured a magnificent advertisement and made certain of a large sale. In reality there was little difference between the two editions, Pope having prepared them both. Some of the letters therein contained certainly had no place in an actual correspondence; many, perhaps most, of them had. The experiment of publishing letters was new to the public of Pope's day. Dr. Johnson says of it, "Pope's epistolary excellence had an open field; he had no English rival, living or dead." This, then, was the first English attempt to interest the public in the private and familiar friendships of literary men by way of their published letters.

diately there was heard so loud a crack as if heaven had burst asunder. The labourers, all solicitous for each other's safety, called to one another; those that were nearest our lovers hearing no answer, stepped to the place where they lay; they first saw a little smoke, and after, this faithful pair—John with one arm about his Sarah's neck, and the other held over her face, as if to screen her from the lightning. They were struck dead, and already grown stiff and cold in this tender posture. There was no mark or discolouring on their bodies, only that Sarah's eyebrow was a little singed, and a small spot between her breasts.

"What a Dishclout of a Soul Hast Thou Made of Me!"

Laurence Sterne to "Lady P."

Mount Coffee-house, *Tuesday*, 3 o'clock.

There is a strange mechanical effect produced in writing a billet-doux within a stone-cast of the lady who engrosses the heart and soul of an inamorato. For this cause (but mostly because I am to dine in this neighbourhood) have I, Tristram Shandy, come forth from my lodgings to a coffee-house, the nearest I could find to my dear Lady ——'s house, and have called for a sheet of gilt paper, to try the truth of this article of my creed. Now for it——

O my dear lady, what a dishclout of a soul hast thou made of me! I think, by the bye, this is a little too familiar an introduction for so unfamiliar a situation—as I stand in with you—where, heaven knows, I am kept at a distance—and despair of getting one inch nearer you, with all the steps and windings I can think of to recommend myself to you. Would not any man in his senses run diametrically from you—and as far as his legs would carry him, rather than thus causelessly, foolishly, and foolhardily

expose himself afresh—and afresh, where his heart and his reason tell him he shall be sure to come off loser, if not totally undone? Why would you tell me you would be glad to see me? Does it give you pleasure to make me more happy—or does it add to your triumph, that your eyes and lips have turned a man into a fool, whom the rest of the town is courting as a wit? I am a fool—the weakest, the most ductile, the most tender fool, that ever woman tried the weakness of—and the most unsettled in my purposes and resolutions of recovering my right mind.—It is but an hour ago, that I kneeled down and swore I never would come near you—and after saying my Lord's Prayer for the sake of the close, *of not being led into temptation*—out I sallied like any Christian hero, ready to take the field against the world, the flesh and the devil; not doubting that I should finally trample them all down under my feet; and now I am got so near you—within this vile stone's cast of your house—I feel myself drawn into a vortex, that has turned my brain upside downwards, and though I had purchased a box ticket to carry me to Miss ——'s benefit, yet I know very well, that was a single line directed to me, to let me know Lady —— would be alone at seven, and suffer me to spend the evening with her, she would infallibly see everything verified I have told her.—I dine at Mr. C——r's in Wigmore Street, in this neighbourhood, where I shall stay till seven in hopes you propose to put me to this proof. If I hear nothing by that time, I shall conclude that you are better disposed of—and shall take a sorry hack, and sorrily jog on to the play—curse on the word. I know nothing but sorrow—except this one thing, that I love you (perhaps foolishly, but)

most sincerely,

L. Sterne.

A Letter which was Never Sent

Lord Byron to Lady Byron.[1]

Pisa, *November* 17, 1821.

I have to acknowledge the receipt of "Ada's hair" which is very soft and pretty, and nearly as dark already as mine was at twelve years old, if I may judge from what I recollect of some in Augusta's possession, taken at that age. But it don't curl,—perhaps from its being let grow.

I also thank you for the inscription of the date and name, and I will tell you why:—I believe that they are the only two or three words of your handwriting in my possession. For your letters I returned; and except the two words, or rather the one word, "Household" written twice in an old account book, I have no other. I burnt your last note, for two reasons:—firstly, it was written in a style not very agreeable; and, secondly, I wished to take your word without documents, which are the worldly resources of suspicious people.

I suppose that this note will reach you somewhere about Ada's birthday—the 10th of December, I believe. She will then be six, so that in about twelve more I shall have some chance of meeting her—perhaps sooner, if I am obliged to go to England by business or otherwise. Recollect, however, one thing, either in distance or nearness;—every day which keeps us asunder should, after so long a period, rather soften our mutual feelings, which must always have one rallying-point as long as our child exists, which I presume we both hope will be long after either of her parents.

[1] Miss Milbanke became Lady Byron on the second of January, 1815. On January 15, 1816, she left Lord Byron never to return.

The time which has elapsed since the separation has been considerably more than the whole brief period of our union, and the not much longer one of our prior acquaintance. We both made a bitter mistake; but now it is over, and irrevocably so. For, at thirty-three on my part, and a few years less on yours, though it is no very extended period of life, still it is one when the habits and thought are generally so formed as to admit of no modification; and as we could not agree when younger, we should with difficulty do so now.

I say all this, because I own to you, that, notwithstanding everything, I considered our re-union as not impossible for more than a year after the separation;—but then I gave up the hope entirely and forever. But this very impossibility of re-union seems to me at least a reason why, on all the few points of discussion which can arise between us, we should preserve the courtesies of life, and as much of its kindness as people who are never to meet may preserve perhaps more easily than nearer connexions. For my own part, I am violent, but not malignant; for only fresh provocations can awaken my resentments. To you, who are colder and more concentrated, I would just hint that you may sometimes mistake the depth of a cold anger for dignity, and a worse feeling for duty. I assure you that I bear you *now* (whatever I may have done) no resentment whatever. Remember, that *if you have injured me* in aught, this forgiveness is something; and that, if I *have injured you,* it is something more still, if it be true, as the moralists say, that the most offending are the least forgiving.

Whether the offence has been solely on my side, or reciprocal, or on yours chiefly, I have ceased to reflect upon any but two things—viz., that you are the mother of my child, and that we shall never meet again. I think if you

also consider the two corresponding points with reference to myself, it will be better for all three.

Yours ever,
NOEL BYRON.

THE LOVE OF A POET

I

John Keats to Fanny Brawne
Wentworth Place, Hampstead, Middx.

Shanklin,
Isle of Wight, Thursday [1 *July,* 1819].
[*Postmark,* Newport, 3 July 1819.]

MY DEAREST LADY,

I am glad I had not an opportunity of sending off a Letter which I wrote for you on Tuesday night—'twas too much like one out of Ro[u]sseau's Heloise. I am more reasonable this morning. The morning is the only proper time for me to write to a beautiful Girl whom I love so much; for at night, when the lonely day has closed, and the lonely, silent, unmusical Chamber is waiting to receive me as into a Sepulchre, then believe me my passion gets entirely the sway, then I would not have you see those R[h]apsodies which I once thought it impossible I should ever give way to, and which I have often laughed at in another, for fear you should [think me] either too unhappy or perhaps a little mad. I am now at a very pleasant Cottage window, looking onto a beautiful hilly country, with a glimpse of the sea; the morning is very fine. I do not know how elastic my spirit might be, what pleasure I might have in living here and breathing and wandering as free as a stag about this beautiful Coast if the remembrance of you did not weigh so upon me. I have never known any unalloy'd Happiness for many days together;

the death or sickness of some one has always spoilt my hours —and now when none such troubles oppress me, it is you must confess very hard that another sort of pain should haunt me. Ask yourself my love whether you are not very cruel to have so entrammelled me, so destroyed my freedom. Will you confess this in the Letter you must write immediately and do all you can to console me in it—make it rich as a draught of poppies to intoxicate me—write the softest words and kiss them that I may at least touch my lips where yours have been. For myself I know not how to express my devotion to so fair a form: I want a brighter word than bright, a fairer word than fair. I almost wish we were butterflies and liv'd but three summer days—three such days with you I could fill with more delight than fifty common years could ever contain. But however selfish I may feel, I am sure I could never act selfishly: as I told you a day or two before I left Hampstead, I will never return to London if my Fate does not turn up Pam[1] or at least a Court-card. Though I could centre my happiness in you, I cannot expect to engross your heart so entirely—indeed if I thought you felt as much for me as I do for you at this moment I do not think I could restrain myself from seeing you again tomorrow for the delight of one embrace. But no—I must live upon hope and Chance. In case of the worst that can happen, I shall still love you—but what hatred shall I have for another! Some lines I read the other day are continually ringing a peal in my ears:

[1] Pam is the knave of clubs in the game of loo.

Ev'n mighty Pam, that kings and queens o'erthrew,
And mow'd down armies in the fights of Loo,
Sad chance of war! now destitute of aid,
Falls undistinguish'd by the victor Spade!

—Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, III., 61-64.

To see those eyes I prize above mine own
Dart favors on another—
And those sweet lips (yielding immortal nectar)
Be gently press'd by any but myself—
Think, think Francesca, what a cursed thing
It were beyond expression!

J.

Do write immediately. There is no Post from this Place, so you must address Post Office, Newport, Isle of Wight. I know before night I shall curse myself for having sent you so cold a letter; yet it is better to do it as much in my senses as possible. Be as kind as the distance will permit to your

J. KEATS.

Present my Compliments to your mother, my love to Margaret and best remembrances to your Brother—if you please so.

II

Wentworth Place, Hampstead, Middx.

July 8th,

[*Postmark,* Newport, 10 *July* 1818.]

MY SWEET GIRL,

Your Letter gave me more delight than anything in the world but yourself could do; indeed I am almost astonished that any absent one should have that luxurious power over my senses which I feel. Even when I am not thinking of you I receive your influence and a tenderer nature stealing upon me. All my thoughts, my unhappiest days and nights, have I find not at all cured me of my love of Beauty, but made it so intense that I am miserable that you are not with me; or rather breathe in that dull sort of patience that cannot be called Life. I

never knew before, what such a love as you have made me feel, was; I did not believe in it; my Fancy was afraid of it, lest it should burn me up. But if you will fully love me, though there may be some fire, 'twill not be more than we can bear when moistened and bedewed with Pleasures. You mention "horrid people" and ask me whether it depend upon them whether I see you again. Do understand me, my love, in this. I have so much of you in my heart that I must turn Mentor when I see a chance of harm befalling you. I would never see any thing but Pleasure in your eyes, love on your lips, and Happiness in your steps. I would wish to see you among those amusements suitable to your inclinations and spirits; so that our loves might be a delight in the midst of Pleasures agreeable enough, rather than a resource from vexations and cares. But I doubt much, in case of the worst, whether I shall be philosopher enough to follow my own Lessons: if I saw my resolution give you a pain I could not. Why may I not speak of your Beauty, since without that I could never have lov'd you ?

I cannot conceive any beginning of such love as I have for you but Beauty. There may be a sort of love for which, without the least sneer at it, I have the highest respect and can admire it in others; but it has not the richness, the bloom, the full form, the enchantment of love after my own heart. So let me speak of your Beauty, though to my own endangering; if you could be so cruel to me as to try elsewhere its Power. You say you are afraid I shall think you do not love me—in saying this you make me ache the more to be near you. I am at the diligent use of my faculties here, I do not pass a day without sprawling some blank verse or tagging some rhymes; and here I must confess, that (since I am on that subject) I love you the more in that I believe you have liked me for my

own sake and for nothing else. I have met with women whom I really think would like to be married to a Poem and to be given away by a Novel. I have seen your Comet, and only wish it was a sign that poor Rice would get well whose illness makes him rather a melancholy companion; and the more so as to conquer his feelings and hide them from me, with a forc'd Pun. I kiss'd your writing over in the hope you had indulg'd me by leaving a trace of honey. What was your dream? Tell it me and I will tell you the interpretation thereof.

Ever yours, my love!

JOHN KEATS.

Do not accuse me of delay—we have not here an opportunity of sending letters every day. Write speedily.

III

Wentworth Place, Hampstead, Middx.

Shanklin,
Thursday Evening
[15 *July* 1819?]

MY LOVE,

I have been in so irritable a state of health these two or three last days, that I did not think I should be able to write this week. Not that I was so ill, but so much so as only to be capable of an unhealthy teasing letter. To-night I am greatly recovered only to feel the languor I have felt after you touched with ardency. You say you perhaps might have made me better; you would then have made me worse; now you could quite effect a cure: What fee my sweet Physician would I not give you to do so. Do not call it folly, when I tell you I took your letter last night to bed with me. In the morning I found your name on

the sealing wax obliterated. I was startled at the bad omen till I recollected that it must have happened in my dreams, and they you know fall out by contraries. You must have found out by this time I am a little given to bode ill like the raven; it is my misfortune not my fault; it has proceeded from the general tenor of the circumstances of my life, and rendered every event suspicious. However I will no more trouble either you or myself with sad Prophecies: though so far I am pleased at it as it has given me opportunity to love your disinterestedness towards me. I can be a raven no more; you and pleasure take possession of me at the same moment. I am afraid you have been unwell. If through me illness have touched you (but it must be with a very gentle hand) I must be selfish enough to feel a little glad at it. Will you forgive me this? I have been reading lately an oriental tale of a very beautiful color—It is of a city of melancholy men, all made so by this circumstance. Through a series of adventures each one of them by turns reach some gardens of Paradise where they meet with a most enchanting Lady; and just as they are going to embrace her, she bids them shut their eyes—they shut them—and on opening their eyes again find themselves descending to the earth in a magic basket. The remembrance of this Lady and their delights lost beyond all recovery render them melancholy ever after. How I applied this to you, my dear; how I palpitated at it; how the certainty that you were in the same world with myself, and though as beautiful, not so talismanic as that Lady; how I could not bear you should be so you must believe because I swear it by yourself. I cannot say when I shall get a volume ready. I have three or four stories half done, but as I cannot write for the mere sake of the press, I am obliged to let them progress or lie still as my fancy chooses. By Christmas perhaps

they may appear, but I am not yet sure they ever will. 'Twill be no matter, for Poems are as common as newspapers and I do not see why it is a greater crime in me than in another to let the verses of an half-fledged brain tumble into the reading-rooms and drawing room windows. Rice has been better lately than usual; he is not suffering from any neglect of his parents who have for some years been able to appreciate him better than they did in his first youth, and are now devoted to his comfort. To-morrow I shall, if my health continues to improve during the night, take a look fa[r]ther about the country, and spy at the parties about here who come hunting after the picturesque like beagles. It is astonishing how they raven down scenery like children do sweetmeats. The wondrous Chine here is a very great Lion; I wish I had as many guineas as there have been spy-glasses in it. I have been, I cannot tell why, in capital spirits this last hour. What reason? When I have to take my candle and retire to a lonely room, without the thought as I fall asleep, of seeing you to-morrow morning? or the next day, or the next—it takes on the appearance of impossibility and eternity—I will say a month—I will say I will see you in a month at most, though no one but yourself should see me; if it be but for an hour. I should not like to be so near you as London without being continually with you; after having once more kissed you Sweet I would rather be here alone at my task than in the bustle and hateful literary chitchat. Meantime you must write to me—as I will every week—for your letters keep me alive. My sweet Girl I cannot speak my love for you. Good night! and

Ever yours
JOHN KEATS

IV

Wentworth Place, Hampstead.

25 College Street.
[*Postmark,* 13 *October* 1819.]

My dearest Girl,

This moment I have set myself to copy some verses out fair. I cannot proceed with any degree of content. I must write you a line or two and see if that will assist in dismissing you from my Mind for ever so short a time. Upon my Soul I can think of nothing else. The time is passed when I had power to advise and warn you against the unpromising morning of my Life. My love has made me selfish. I cannot exist without you. I am forgetful of everything but seeing you again—my Life seems to stop there—I see no further. You have absorb'd me. I have a sensation at the present moment as though I was dissolving—I should be exquisitely miserable without the hope of soon seeing you. I should be afraid to separate myself far from you. My sweet Fanny, will your heart never change? My love, will it? I have no limit now to my love . . . . Your note came in just here. I cannot be happier away from you. 'Tis richer than an Argosy of Pearles. Do not threat me even in jest. I have been astonished that Men could die Martyrs for religion—I have shudder'd at it. I shudder no more—I could be martyr'd for my Religion—Love is my religion—I could die for that. I could die for you. My Creed is Love and you are its only tenet. You have ravish'd me away by a Power I cannot resist; and yet I could resist till I saw you; and even since I have seen you I have endeavoured often "to reason against the reasons of my Love." I can do that

no more—the pain would be too great. My love is selfish. I cannot breathe without you.

Yours for ever

JOHN KEATS.

V

[Wentworth Place,
4 *February* 1820?]

DEAREST FANNY, I shall send this the moment you return. They say I must remain confined to this room for some time. The consciousness that you love me will make a pleasant prison of the house next to yours. You must come and see me frequently: this evening, without fail—when you must not mind about my speaking in a low tone for I am ordered to do so though I *can* speak out.

Yours ever

sweetest love.—

J. KEATS.

VI

[Wentworth Place,
February 1820?]

MY DEAR FANNY,

I think you had better not make any long stay with me when Mr. Brown is at home. Whenever he goes out you may bring your work. You will have a pleasant walk to-day. I shall see you pass. I shall follow you with my eyes over the Heath. Will you come towards evening instead of before dinner? When you are gone, 'tis past—if you do not come till the evening I have something to look forward to all day. Come round to my window for a moment when you have read this. Thank your Mother,

for the preserves, for me. The raspberry will be too sweet not having any acid; therefore as you are so good a girl I shall make you a present of it. Good bye

My sweet Love !

J. Keats.

VII

[Wentworth Place,
March 1820?]

Sweetest Fanny,

You fear, sometimes, I do not love you so much as you wish? My dear Girl I love you ever and ever and without reserve. The more I have known you the more have I lov'd. In every way—even my jealousies have been agonies of Love, in the hottest fit I ever had I would have died for you. I have vex'd you too much. But for Love! Can I help it? You are always new. The last of your kisses was ever the sweetest; the last smile the brightest; the last movement the gracefullest. When you pass'd my window home yesterday, I was fill'd with as much admiration as if I had then seen you for the first time. You uttered a half complaint once that I only lov'd your Beauty. Have I nothing else then to love in you but that? Do not I see a heart naturally furnish'd with wings imprison itself with me? No ill prospect has been able to turn your thoughts a moment from me. This perhaps should be as much a subject of sorrow as joy—but I will not talk of that. Even if you did not love me I could not help an entire devotion to you: how much more deeply then must I feel for you knowing you love me. My Mind has been the most discontented and restless one that ever was put into a body too small for it. I never felt my Mind repose upon anything with complete and undis-

tracted enjoyment—upon no person but you. When you are in the room my thoughts never fly out of window: you always concentrate my whole senses. The anxiety shown about our Loves in your last note is an immense pleasure to me: however you must not suffer such speculations to molest you any more: nor will I any more believe you can have the least pique against me. Brown is gone out—but here is Mrs. Wylie—when she is gone I shall be awake for you.—Remembrances to your Mother.

Your affectionate
J. KEATS.

VIII

Wednesday Morn[in]g.
[Kentish Town, 5 *July* 1820?]

MY DEAREST GIRL,

I have been a walk this morning with a book in my hand, but as usual I have been occupied with nothing but you; I wish I could say in an agreeable manner. I am tormented day and night. They talk of my going to Italy. 'Tis certain I shall never recover if I am to be so long separate from you: yet with all this devotion to you I cannot persuade myself into any confidence of you. Past experience connected with the fact of my long separation from you gives me agonies which are scarcely to be talked of. When your mother comes I shall be very sudden and expert in asking her whether you have been to Mrs. Dilke's, for she might say no to make me easy. I am literally worn to death, which seems my only recourse. I cannot forget what has pass'd. What? nothing with a man of the world, but to me dreadful. I will get rid of this as much as possible. When you were in the habit of flirting with Brown you would have left off, could your own heart have

felt one half of one pang mine did. Brown is a good sort of Man—he did not know he was doing me to death by inches. I feel the effect of every one of those hours in my side now; and for that cause, though he has done me many services, though I know his love and friendship for me, though at this moment I should be without pence were it not for his assistance, I will never see or speak to him until we are both old men, if we are to be. I *will* resent my heart having been made a football. You will call this madness. I have heard you say that it was not unpleasant to wait a few years—you have amusements—your mind is away—you have not brooded over one idea as I have, and how should you? You are to me an object intensely desirable—the air I breathe in a room empty of you is unhealthy. I am not the same to you—no—you can wait—you have a thousand activities—you can be happy without me. Any party, any thing to fill up the day has been enough. How have you pass'd this month? Who have you smil'd with? All this may seem savage in me. You do not feel as I do—you do not know what it is to love—one day you may—your time is not come. Ask yourself how many unhappy hours Keats has caused you in Loneliness. For myself I have been a Martyr the whole time, and for this reason I speak; the confession is forc'd from me by the torture. I appeal to you by the blood of that Christ you believe in: Do not write to me if you have done anything this month which it would have pained me to have seen. You may have altered—if you have not—if you still behave in dancing rooms and other societies as I have seen you—I do not want to live—if you have done so I wish this coming night may be my last. I cannot live without you, and not only you but *chaste you; virtuous you.* The Sun rises and sets, the day passes, and you follow the bent of your inclination to a certain extent—you

have no conception of the quantity of miserable feeling that passes through me in a day.—Be serious! Love is not a plaything—and again do not write unless you can do it with a crystal conscience. I would sooner die for want of you than——

Yours for ever
J. Keats.

Its Sequel

I

John Keats to Charles Armitage Brown

Wentworth Place, Hampstead.

Saturday, *Sept.* 28 [1820]
Maria Crowther,
Off Yarmouth, Isle of Wight.

My dear Brown,

The time has not yet come for a pleasant letter from me. I have delayed writing to you from time to time, because I felt how impossible it was to enliven you with one heartening hope of my recovery; this morning in bed the matter struck me in a different manner; I thought I would write "while I was in some liking," or I might become too ill to write at all; and then if the desire to have written should become strong it would be a great affliction to me. I have many more letters to write, and I bless my stars that I have begun, for time seems to press,—this may be my best opportunity. We are in a calm. I am easy enough this morning. If my spirits seem too low you may in some degree impute it to our having been at sea a fortnight without making any way. I was very disappointed at not meeting you at Bedhampton, and am very provoked

at the thought of you being at Chichester to-day.[1] I should have delighted in setting off for London for the sensation merely,—for what should I do there? I could not leave my lungs or stomach or other worse things behind me. I wish to write on subjects that will not agitate me much—there is one I must mention and have done with it. Even if my body would recover of itself, this would prevent it. The very thing which I want to live most for will be a great occasion of my death. I cannot help it. Who can help it? Were I in health it would make me ill, and how can I bear it in my state? I dare say you will be able to guess on what subject I am harping—you know what was my greatest pain during the first part of my illness at your house. I wish for death every day and night to deliver me from these pains, and then I wish death away, for death would destroy even those pains which are better than nothing. Land and sea, weakness and decline, are great separators, but death is the great divorcer for ever. When the pang of this thought has passed through my mind, I may say the bitterness of death is passed. I often wish for you that you might flatter me with the best. I think without my mentioning it for my sake you would be a friend to Miss Brawne when I am dead. You think she has many faults—but, for my sake, think she has not one. If there is anything you can do for her by word or deed I know you will do it. I am in a state at present in which woman merely as woman can have no more power over me than stocks and stones, and yet the difference of my sensations with respect to Miss Brawne and my sister is amazing. The one seems to absorb the other to a de-

[1] Lord Houghton records that, "when Keats's ship was driven back into Portsmouth by stress of weather, Mr. Brown was staying in the neighbourhood within ten miles, when Keats landed and spent a day on shore."

gree incredible. I seldom think of my brother and sister in America. The thought of leaving Miss Brawne is beyond everything horrible—the sense of darkness coming over me—I eternally see her figure eternally vanishing. Some of the phrases she was in the habit of using during my last nursing at Wentworth Place ring in my ears. Is there another life? Shall I awake and find all this a dream? There must be, we cannot be created for this sort of suffering. The receiving this letter is to be one of yours. I will say nothing about our friendship, or rather yours to me, more than that, as you deserve to escape, you will never be so unhappy as I am. I should think of—you in my last moments. I shall endeavour to write to Miss Brawne if possible to-day. A sudden stop to my life in the middle of one of these letters would be no bad thing, for it keeps one in a sort of fever awhile. Though fatigued with a letter longer than any I have written for a long while, it would be better to go on for ever than awake to a sense of contrary winds. We expect to put into Portland Roads to-night. The captain, the crew, and the passengers, are all ill-tempered and weary. I shall write to Dilke. I feel as if I was closing my last letter to you.

My dear Brown,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.

II

John Keats to Charles Armitage Brown

Naples,
1 *November* [1820].

MY DEAR BROWN,

Yesterday we were let out of Quarantine, during which my health suffered more from bad air and the stifled

cabin than it had done the whole voyage. The fresh air revived me a little, and I hope I am well enough this morning to write to you a short, calm letter;—if that can be called one, in which I am afraid to speak of what I would fainest dwell upon. As I have gone thus far into it, I must go on a little;—perhaps it may relieve the load of WRETCHEDNESS which presses upon me. The persuasion that I shall see her no more will kill me. I cannot q—[1] My dear Brown, I should have had her when I was in health, and I should have remained well. I can bear to die—I cannot bear to leave her. O God! God! God! Everything I have in my trunks that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear. The silk lining she put in my travelling cap scalds my head. My imagination is horribly vivid about her—I see her—I hear her. There is nothing in the world of sufficient interest to divert me from her a moment. This was the case when I was in England; I cannot recollect, without shuddering, the time that I was a prisoner at Hunt's and used to keep my eyes fixed on Hampstead all day. Then there was a good hope of seeing her again—Now!—O that I could be buried near where she lives! I am afraid to write to her—to receive a letter from her—to see her handwriting would break my heart—even to hear of her anyhow, to see her name written, would be more than I can bear. My dear Brown, what am I to do? Where can I look for consolation or ease? If I had any chance of recovery, this passion would kill me. Indeed, through the whole of my illness, both at your house and at Kentish Town, this fever has never ceased wearing me out. When you write to me,

[1] Brown makes the following note upon this passage:—

"He could not go on with this sentence nor even write the word 'quit,'—as I suppose. The word WRETCHEDNESS above, he himself wrote in large characters."

which you will do immediately, write to Rome (*poste restante*)—if she is well and happy, put a mark thus + ; if——

Remember me to all. I will endeavour to bear my miseries patiently. A person in my state of health should not have such miseries to bear. Write a short note to my sister, saying you have heard from me. Severn is very well. If I were in better health I would urge your coming to Rome. I fear there is no one can give me any comfort. Is there any news of George? O, that something fortunate had ever happened to me or my brothers! —then I might hope,—but despair is forced upon me as a habit. My dear Brown, for my sake, be her advocate for ever. I cannot say a word about Naples; I do not feel at all concerned in the thousand novelties around me. I am afraid to write to her—I should like her to know that I do not forget her. Oh, Brown, I have coals of fire in my breast. It surprises me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery. Was I born for this end? God bless her, and her mother, and my sister, and George, and his wife, and you, and all !

Your ever affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.

Thursday [2 *November* 1820].—I was a day too early for the Courier. He sets out now. I have been more calm to-day, though in a half dread of not continuing so. I said nothing of my health; I know nothing of it; you will hear Severn's account, from [Haslam]. I must leave off. You bring my thoughts too near to Fanny. God bless you!

III

John Keats to Armitage Brown [1]

Rome, *November* 30, 1820.

My dear Brown,

'Tis the most difficult thing in the world to me to write a letter. My stomach continues so bad, that I feel it worse on opening any book,—yet I am much better than I was in quarantine. Then I am afraid to encounter the pro-ing and con-ing of anything interesting to me in England. I have an habitual feeling of my real life having passed, and that I am leading a posthumous existence. God knows how it would have been—but it appears to me—however, I will not speak of that subject. I must have been at Bedhampton nearly at the time you were writing to me from Chichester—how unfortunate—and to pass on the river too! There was my star predominant! I cannot answer anything in your letter, which followed me from Naples to Rome, because I am afraid to look it over again. I am so weak (in mind) that I cannot bear the sight of any handwriting of a friend I love so much as I do you. Yet I ride the little horse, and, at my worst, even in quarantine, summoned up more puns, in a sort of desperation, in one week than in any year of my life. There is one thought enough to kill me; I have been well, healthy, alert, etc., walking with her, and now—the knowledge of contrast, feeling for light and shade, all that information (primitive sense) necessary for a poem, are great enemies to the recovery of the stomach. There, you rogue, I put you to the torture; but you must bring your philosophy to bear, as I do mine, really, or how should I be able to live? Dr. Clark is very attentive to me; he says there is very

[1] This is believed to be the last letter that he wrote.

little the matter with my lungs, but my stomach, he says, is very bad. I am well disappointed in hearing good news from George,[1] for it runs in my head we shall all die young. I have not written to Reynolds yet, which he must think very neglectful; being anxious to send him a good account of my health, I have delayed it from week to week. If I recover, I will do all in my power to correct the mistakes made during sickness; and if I should not, all my faults will be forgiven. Severn is very well, though he leads so dull a life with me. Remember me to all friends, and tell Haslam I should not have left London without taking leave of him, but from being so low in body and mind. Write to George as soon as you receive this, and tell him how I am, as far as you can guess; and also a note to my sister—who walks about my imagination like a ghost—she is so like Tom.[2] I can scarcely bid you good-bye, even in a letter. I always made an awkward bow.

God bless you !

JOHN KEATS.

IV

Joseph Severn to Mrs. Brawne

Rome, *Dec.* 14*th,* 1820.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I fear poor Keats is at his worst. A most unlooked-for relapse has confined him to his bed, with every chance against him. It has been so sudden upon what I thought convalescence, and without any seeming cause, that I cannot calculate on the next change. I dread it, for his

[1] George Keats lived until 1842, meantime making and losing a couple of fortunes. His sister, Frances Mary, or Fanny, became Mrs. Llanos and lived to be eighty-six, dying in 1889.

[2] Thomas Keats, his youngest brother, who had died of consumption, Dec. 1, 1818.

suffering is so great, so continued, and his fortitude so completely gone, that any further change must make him delirious. This is the fifth day, and I see him get worse.

December 17th, 4 a. m.—Not a moment can I be from him. I sit by his bed and read all day, and at night I humour him in all his wanderings. He has just fallen asleep, the first sleep for eight nights, and now from mere exhaustion. I hope he will not wake till I have written, for I am anxious that you should know the truth; yet I dare not let him see I think his state dangerous. On the morning of this attack he was going on in good spirits quite merrily, when, in an instant, a cough seized him, and he vomited two cupfuls of blood. In a moment I got Dr. Clark, who took eight ounces of blood from his arm—it was black and thick. Keats was much alarmed and dejected. What a sorrowful day I had with him! He rushed out of bed and said, "This day shall be my last;" and but for me most certainly it would. The blood broke forth in similar quantity the next morning, and he was bled again. I was afterwards so fortunate as to talk him into a little calmness, and he soon became quite patient. Now the blood has come up in coughing five times. Not a single thing will he digest, yet he keeps on craving for food. Every day he raves he will die of hunger, and I've been obliged to give him more than he was allowed. His imagination and memory present every thought to him in horror; the recollection of "his good friend Brown," of "his four happy weeks spent under *her* care," of his sister and brother. Oh! he will mourn over all to me whilst I cool his burning forehead, till I tremble for his intellect. How can he be "Keats" again after all this? Yet I may see it too gloomily, since each coming night I sit up adds its dismal contents to my mind.

Dr. Clark will not say much; although there are no

bounds to his attention, yet he can with little success "administer to a mind diseased." All that can be done he does most kindly, while his lady, like himself in refined feeling, prepares all that poor Keats takes, for in this wilderness of a place, for an invalid, there was no alternative. Yesterday Dr. Clark went all over Rome for a certain kind of fish, and just as I received it, carefully dressed, Keats was taken with spitting of blood.

We have the best opinion of Dr. Clark's skill; he comes over four or five times a day, and he has left word for us to call him up, at any moment, in case of danger. My spirits have been quite pulled down. Those wretched Romans have no idea of comfort. I am obliged to do everything for him. I wish you were here.

I have just looked at him. This will be good-night.

V

William Haslam to Joseph Severn

Greenwich, *4th December,* 1820.

My dear Severn,

Your letter from shipboard[1] when under quarantine gave me an extent of anxiety such as my heart hath not known since I parted with Keats at Gravesend. It hung about me intensely for days, and at nights I dreamt of you, but I did not, could not, show it to a soul. I could not bring myself to give occasion to that grief to any man that the perusal had forced on me. Do not, however, mention in any of your letters home that I have acknowledged the receipt of a letter of that date, for altho' I should not forgive myself if I had shown it—still friends will not acquit one—for that I did not show it,—but hoped you

[1] Severn had written to Haslam from the *Maria Crowther,* and had posted his letter on entering Naples.

would write, and you ought, Severn, to have written within three days again. Why have you not kept your diary? I ask you solemnly, for no one thing on earth can give such satisfaction at home as such minute detail as you set out with. If you have discontinued it, in God's name resume it, and send it regularly to me, only that, however, I may see fit to circulate it. I will zealously preserve each section (number each, or letter it, that I may do this unerringly, and write on *bank post paper*), so that you may possess the entire diary whenever you call upon me for it. Do This, Severn, tho' at some sacrifice of your inherent dislike of order and of obligation to do a thing—do it, if but because I ask it.

Your letter came to me but last Friday (to-day is Monday, and our mail goes out to-morrow); you will hardly think that the receipt of it relieved me, and yet, sorrowful as are its contents, it did, so deeply had the letter of which I have been speaking distressed me—"that Keats this morning made an Italian pun;" these, Severn, are the things that do one's heart good. "Water parted from the sea," was another of them. But, the fact of the return of Keats's spitting of blood stands! And yet I did not but expect the voyage would have the effect of inducing its return; the climate, however, will, I trust, avail him. Keep him quiet, get the winter through; an opening year in Italy will perfect everything. Ere this reaches you, I trust Doctor Clark will have confirmed the most sanguine hopes of his friends in England; and to you, my friend,, I hope he will have given what you stand much in need of —a confidence amounting to a faith. Study to gain this, Severn, for trust me, that much, very much with invalids depends upon the countenances of those about them. Omit no opportunities that present themselves to induce Keats to disburthern his mind to you. I know (tho' since he

left England it has come to my knowledge) that he had much upon it. Avoid speaking of George to him. George is a scoundrel! but talk of his friends in England, of their love, their hopes of him. Keats must get himself well again, Severn, if but for us. I, for one, cannot afford to lose him. If I know what it is to love, I truly love John Keats. I sent your letter (the last) to Brown. Brown read it, with omissions and additions, next door, and returned it to me to-day. I send by this post a letter from Brown to Keats sent to me on Saturday before he saw the last-mentioned, also one from your sister Maria, who called and left it with me to-day. Your family, she tells me, are all well. Tom has several times called on me, and I understand your father has at last become tolerably reconciled. I continue miserably oppressed, I mean as regards my executorship; 'tis now near three o'clock that I am closing this for you. My wife and child are well, and I, at least in them, am happy.

Your attached friend,
Wm. Haslam.

VI

Joseph Severn to Mrs. Brawne

Rome,
Jan. 11*th,* 1821. 1 o'clock morning,
(finished 3 a. m.)

My dear Madam,

I said that "the first good news I had should be for the kind Mrs. Brawne." I am thankful and delighted to make good my promise, to be able at all to do it, for amid all the horrors hovering over poor Keats this was the most dreadful—that I could see no possible way, and but a fallacious hope for his recovery; but now, thank God, I have a real one. I most certainly think I shall bring him

back to England—at least my anxiety for his recovery and comfort made me think this—for half the cause of his danger had arisen for the loss of England, from the dread of never seeing it more. O! this hung upon him like a torture: never may I behold the sight again, even in my direst enemy. Little did I think what a task of affliction and danger I had undertaken, for I thought only of the beautiful mind of Keats, my attachment to him, and his convalescence. But I will tell you, dear madam, the singular reasons I have for hoping for his recovery. In the first fortnight of this attack his memory presented to him everything that was dear and delightful, even to the minutiæ, and with all the persecution, and I may say villainy, practised upon him—his exquisite sensibility for everyone, save his poor self,—all his own comfort expended on others—almost in vain. These he would contrast with his present suffering, and say that all was brought on by them, and he was right. Now he has changed to calmness and quietude, as singular as productive of good, for his mind was most certainly killing him. He has now given up all thoughts, hopes, or even wish for recovery. His mind is in a state of peace from the final leave he has taken from this world and all its future hopes; this has been an immense weight for him to rise from. He remains quiet and submissive under his heavy fate. Now, if anything will recover him, it is this absence of himself. I have perceived for the last three days symptoms of recovery. Dr. Clark even thinks so. Nature again revives in him—I mean where art was used before; yesterday he permitted me to carry him from his bedroom to our sitting-room—to put clean things on him—and to talk about my painting to him. This is my good news—don't think it otherwise, my dear madam, for I have been in such a state of anxiety and discomfiture in this barba-

rous place, that the least hope of my friend's recovery is a heaven to me.

For three weeks I have never left him—I have sat up all night—I have read to him nearly all day, and even in the night—I light the fire—make his breakfast, and sometimes am obliged to cook—make his bed, and even sweep the room. I can have these things done, but never at the time when they must and ought to be done—so that you will see my alternative; what enrages me most is making a fire—I blow—blow for an hour—the smoke comes fuming out—my kettle falls over on the burning sticks—no stove—Keats calling me to be with him—the fire catching my hands and the door-bell ringing: all these to one quite unused and not at all capable—with the want of even proper material—come not a little galling. But to my great surprise I am not ill—or even restless—nor have I been all the time; there is nothing but what I will do for him—there is no alternative but what I think and provide myself against—except his death—not the loss of him—I am prepared to bear that—but the inhumanity, the barbarism of these Italians. So far I have kept everything from poor Keats; but if he did know but part what I suffer from them and their cursed laws, it would kill him. Just to instance one thing among many. News was brought me the other day that our gentle landlady had reported to the police that my friend was dying of consumption. Now their law is—that every individual thing, even to the paper on the walls in each room the patient has been in, shall without reserve be destroyed by fire, the loss to be made good by his friends. This startled me not a little, for in our sitting-room where I wanted to bring him, there is property worth about £150, besides all our own books, etc.—invaluable. Now my difficulty was to shift him to this room, and let no one know it. This was a

heavy task from the unfortunate manner of the place; our landlady's apartments are on the same floor with ours—her servant waits on me when it pleases her, and enters from an adjoining room.

I was determined on removing Keats, let what would be the consequence. The change was most essential to his health and spirits, and the following morning I set about accomplishing it. In the first place I blocked up their door so as they could not enter, then made a bed on the sofa, and removed my friend to it. The greatest difficulty was in keeping all from him; I succeeded in this too, by making his bed, and sweeping his room where it is—and going dinnerless with all the pretensions of dining, and persuading him that their servant had made his bed and I had been dining. He half suspected this, but as he could not tell the why and the wherefore, there it ended. I got him back in the afternoon, and no one save Dr. Clark knew about it. Dr. Clark still attends him with his usual kindness, and shows his good heart in everything he does; the like of his lady—I cannot tell which shows us the most kindness. *I* even am a mark of their care—mince-pies and numberless nice things come over to keep me alive. But for their kindness I am afraid we should go on very gloomily. Now, my dear madam, I must leave off—my eyes are beginning to be unruly, and I must write a most important letter to our president, Sir Thomas Lawrence, before I suffer myself to go to sleep. Will you be so kind as to write Mr. Taylor that it was at Messrs, Torlonias' advice Mr. Keats drew a bill for the whole sum £120?—this was to save the trouble and expense of many small bills, he now draws in small sums. I have the whole of his affairs under charge, and am trying the nearest possible way. Mr. Taylor will hear from Dr. Clark about the bill; it will be well arranged.

Present my respectful compliments to Miss Brawne, who I hope and trust is quite well. Now that I think of her, my mind is carried to your happy Wentworth Place, where all that peaceful English comfort seems to exist. O! I would my unfortunate friend had never left your Wentworth Place—for the hopeless advantages of this comfortless Italy. He has many, many times talked over "the few happy days at your house, the only time when his mind was at ease." I hope still to see him with you again. Farewell, my dear madam. One more thing I must say—poor Keats cannot see any letters, at least he will not—they affect him so much and increase his danger. The two last I repented giving, he made me put them into his box —unread; more of these when I write again, meanwhile any matter of moment had better come to me. I will be very happy to receive advice and remembrance from you. Once more farewell.

Your obedient and affectionate servant,

JOSEPH SEVERN.

3 o'clock morning.

P.S. I have just looked at him—he is in a beautiful sleep; in look he is very much more like himself—I have the greatest [hope] of him——

VII

Joseph Severn to Mrs. Brawne

Rome,
12th *February,* 1821.

MY DEAR MRS. BRAWNE,—

I have just received your letter of the 15th—the contrast of your quiet friendly Hampstead with this lonely place and our poor suffering Keats brings the tears into my eyes.

I wish many, many times that he had never left you. His recovery must have been impossible whilst he was in England, and his excessive grief since has made it more so. In your care he seems to me like an infant in its mother's arms—you would have smoothed down his pain by varieties, his death might have been eased by the sight of his many friends. But here, with one solitary friend, in a place else savage for an invalid he has had one more pang added to his many, for I have had the hardest task in keeping from him my painful situation. He had refused all food, but I tried him every way—I left him no excuse. Many times I have prepared his meals six times over, and kept from him the trouble I had in doing it. I have not been able to leave him; that is, I have not dared to, but when he slept. Had he come here alone he would have plunged into the grave in secret—we should never have known one syllable about him. This reflection alone repays me for all I have done. It is impossible to conceive what the sufferings of this poor fellow have been. Now he is still alive and calm. If I say more I shall say too much. Yet at times I have hoped he would recover, but the Doctor shook his head, and Keats would not hear that he was better—the thought of recovery is beyond everything dreadful to him. We now dare not perceive any improvement, for the hope of death seems his only comfort. He talks of the quiet grave as the first rest he can ever have. I can believe and feel this most truly. In the last week a great desire for books came across his mind. I got him all the books at hand and for three days this charm lasted on him, but now it is gone. Yet he is very calm—he is more and more reconciled to his fortunes.

Feb. 14th.—Little or no change has taken place in Keats since the commencement of this, except this beautiful one that his mind is growing to great quietness and peace—I

find this change has its rise from the increasing weakness of his body, but it seems like a delightful sleep to me. I have been beating about in the tempest of his mind so long. To-night he has talked very much to me, but so easily that he at last fell into a pleasant sleep—he seems to have comfortable dreams without nightmare. This will bring on some change—it cannot be worse, it may be better. Among the many things he has requested of me to-night, this is the principal, that on his grave shall be this—

"Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

You will understand this so well I will not say a word about it, but is it not dreadful that he should with all his misfortunes on his mind and perhaps wrought up to their abisme, end his life without one jot of human happiness? When he first came here he purchased a copy of Alfieri, but put it down at the second page—"Misera me!" He was much affected at this passage.

"Misera me! Sollievo a me non resta
Altro ch 'l pianto, ed il pianto é delitto."

VIII

Joseph Severn to Charles Armitage Brown

February, 1821.

Poor Keats has just fallen asleep. I have watched him and read to him to his very last wink; he had been saying to me, "Severn, I can see under your quiet look immense contention—you don't know what you are reading. You are enduring for me more than I would have you. O! that my last hour was come!" He is sinking daily; perhaps another three weeks may lose him to me for ever. I was sure of his recovery when we set out. I was selfish, I

thought of his value to me; I made my own public success to depend on his candour to me. Torlonia, the banker, has refused us any more money; the bill is returned unaccepted, and to-morrow I must pay my last crown for this cursed lodging-place; and, what is more, if he dies all the beds and furniture will be burnt and the walls scraped, and they will come on me for a hundred pounds or more. But, above all, this noble fellow lying on the bed and without the common spiritual comforts that many a rogue and fool has in his last moments; if I do break down it will be under this; but I pray that some angel of goodness may yet lead him through this dark wilderness. If I could leave Keats every day for a time I could soon raise money by my painting, but he will not let me out of his sight, he will not bear the face of a stranger. I would rather cut my tongue out than tell him I must get the money—that would kill him at a word. You see my hopes of being kept by the Royal Academy will be cut off unless I send a picture by the spring. I have written to Sir T. Lawrence. I have got a volume of Jeremy Taylor's works, which Keats has heard me read to-night. This is a treasure indeed, and came when I should have thought it hopeless. Why may not other good things come? I will keep myself up with such hopes. Dr. Clark is still the same, though he knows about the bill; he is afraid the next change will be to diarrhœa. Keats sees all this—his knowledge of anatomy makes every change tenfold worse; every way he is unfortunate, yet every one offers me assistance on his account. He cannot read any letters, he has made me put them by him unopened. They tear him to pieces—he dare not look on the outside any more; make this known.

IX

Joseph Severn to William Haslam

Feb. 22nd, 1821.

My dear Haslam,—

O, how anxious I am to hear from you! I have nothing to break this dreadful solitude but letters. Day after day, night after night, here I am by our poor dying friend. My spirits, my intellect, and my health are breaking down. All run away, and even if they did not, Keats would not do without me. Last night I thought he was going, I could hear the phlegm in his throat; he bade me lift him up on the bed or he would die with pain. I watched him all night, expecting him to be suffocated at every cough. This morning, by the pale daylight, the change in him frightened me; he has sunk in the last three days to a most ghastly look. Though Dr. Clark has prepared me for the worst, I shall be ill able to bear to be set free even from this, my horrible situation, by the loss of him. I am still quite precluded from painting, which may be of consequence to me. Poor Keats has me ever by him, and shadows out the form of one solitary friend; he opens his eyes in great doubt and horror, but when they fall upon me they close gently, open quietly and close again, till he sinks to sleep. This thought alone would keep me by him till he dies; and why did I say I was losing my time? The advantages I have gained by knowing John Keats are double and treble any I could have won by any other occupation. Farewell.

X

Joseph Severn to Charles Armitage Brown

February (?), 1821.

My dear Brown,

He is gone. He died with the most perfect ease. He seemed to go to sleep. On the 23d, Friday, at half-past four, the approach of death came on. "Severn—I—lift me up, for I am dying. I shall die easy. Don't be frightened! Thank God it has come." I lifted him up in my arms, and the phlegm seemed boiling in his throat. This increased until eleven at night, when he gradually sank into death, so quiet that I still thought he slept—but I cannot say more now. I am broken down beyond my strength. I cannot be left alone. I have not slept for nine days, I will say the days since ——. On Saturday a gentleman came to cast the face, hand, and foot. On Sunday his body was opened; the lungs were completely gone, the doctors could not conceive how he had lived in the last two months. Dr. Clark will write you on this head. . . .

THE AFTERMATH

I

The Letter which Came too Late[1]

Leigh Hunt to Joseph Severn

Vale of Health, Hampstead, *March* 8, 1821.

Dear Severn,—

You have concluded, of course, that I have sent no letters to Rome, because I was aware of the effect they

[1] Keats died in Rome on February 23, 1821. He was lying in his grave when Leigh Hunt penned this letter.

would have on Keats's mind; and this is the principal cause,—for besides what I have been told of his emotions about letters in Italy, I remember his telling me on one occasion that, in his sick moments, he never wished to receive another letter, or even to see another face however friendly. But I still should have written to you had I not been almost at death's door myself. You will imagine how ill I have been when you hear that I have just begun writing for the *Examiner* and *Indicator,* after an interval of several months, during which my flesh wasted from me in sickness and melancholy. Judge how often I thought of Keats, and with what feelings. Mr. Brown tells me he is comparatively calm now, or rather quite so. If he can bear to hear of us, pray tell him—but he knows it all already, and can put it in better language than any man. I hear he does not like to be told that he may get better; nor is it to be wondered at, considering his firm persuasion that he shall not recover. He can only regard it as a puerile thing, and an insinuation that he cannot bear to think he shall die. But if this persuasion should happen no longer to be so strong upon him, or if he can now put up with such attempts to console him, remind him of what I have said a thousand times, and that I still (upon my honour, Severn) think always that I have seen too many instances of recovery from apparently desperate cases of consumption, not to indulge in hope to the very last. If he cannot bear this, tell him—tell that great poet and noble-hearted man—that we shall all bear his memory in the most precious part of our hearts, and that the world shall bow their heads to it, as our loves do. Or if this again will trouble his spirit, tell him we shall never cease to remember and love him, and that the most sceptical of us hath faith enough in the high things that nature put into our heads to think that all who are of one accord in

mind and heart are journeying to one and the same place, and shall unite somehow or other again, face to face, mutually conscious, mutually delighted. Tell him he is only before us on the road, as he was in everything else; or, whether you tell him the latter or no, tell him the former, and add that we shall never forget he was so, and that we are coming after him. The tears are again in my eyes, and I must not afford to shed them. The next letter I write shall be more to yourself, and a little more refreshing to your spirits, which we are very sensible must have been greatly taxed. But whether our friend dies or not, it will not be among the least lofty of our recollections by-and-by, that you helped to smooth the sick-bed of so fine a being.

God bless you, dear Severn,

Your sincere friend,

Leigh Hunt.

II

The First Copy of the "Adonais"

P. B. Shelley to Joseph Severn

Dear Sir,— Pisa, *November* 29, 1821.

I send you the elegy of poor Keats—and I wish it were better worth your acceptance. You will see, by the preface, that it was written before I could obtain any particular account of his last moments; all that I still know was communicated to me by a friend who had derived his information from Colonel Finch; I have ventured to express, as I felt, the respect and admiration which *your* conduct towards him demands.

In spite of his transcendent genius, Keats never was, nor ever will be, a popular poet; and the total neglect and obscurity in which the astonishing remnants of his mind still

lie was hardly to be dissipated by a writer, who, however he may differ from Keats in more important qualities, at least resembles him in that accidental one, a want of popularity.

I have little hope, therefore, that the poem I send you will excite any attention, nor do I feel assured that a critical notice of his writings would find a single reader. But for these considerations, it had been my intention to have collected the remnants of his compositions, and to have published them with a Life and Criticism. Has he left any poems or writings of whatsoever kind, and in whose possession are they? Perhaps you would oblige me by information on this point.

Many thanks for the picture you promised me: I shall consider it among the most sacred relics of the past. For my part, I little expected, when I last saw Keats at my friend Leigh Hunt's, that I should survive him.[1]

Should you ever pass through Pisa, I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you, and of cultivating an acquaintance into something pleasant, begun under such melancholy auspices.

Accept, my dear sir, the assurance of my highest esteem, and believe me,

Your most sincere and faithful servant,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

[1] When, seven and a half months after the writing of this letter, Shelley's body was washed up on the beach of Viarreggio, there was found in his coat pocket a copy of Keats' last volume, "Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems," published 1820. Before setting sail he had visited Pisa in the company of Leigh Hunt who, at his departure, had given to him this book to read on the voyage, saying, "Keep it until you can give it back to me with your own hand." The page was turned down at The Eve of St. Agnes as if, in mid act of reading, some danger of the sea had threatened and the book had been thrust hastily away.

Mazzini is Beloved by a Jewish Lady

Jane Welsh Carlyle to Thomas Carlyle

Chelsea, *Thursday, September* 18, 1845.

My Dear, . . . I have got quite over the fatigues of my journey, which had been most provokingly aggravated for me by a circumstance "which it may be interesting not to state"; the last two nights I have slept quite as well as I was doing at Seaforth. The retirement of Cheyne Row is as deep at present as anyone not absolutely a Timon of Athens could desire. "There is, in the first place" (as Mr. Paulet would say), the physical impossibility (hardly anybody being left in town), and then the weather has been so tempestuous that nobody in his senses (except Mazzini, who never reflects whether it be raining or no) would come out to make visits. He (Mazzini) came the day before yesterday, immediately on receiving notification of my advent, and his doe-skin boots were oozing out water in a manner frightful to behold. He looked much as I left him, and appeared to have made no progress of a practical sort. He told me nothing worth recording, except that he had received the other day a declaration of love. And this he told with the same *calma* and historical precision with which you might have said you had received an invitation to take the chair at a Mechanics' Institute dinner. Of course I asked "the particulars." "Why not?" and I got them fully, at the same time with brevity, and without a smile. Since the assassination affair, he had received many invitations to the house of a Jew merchant of Italian extraction, where there are several daughters—"what shall I say?—horribly ugly: that is, repugnant for me entirely." One of them is "nevertheless very strong in music," and

seeing that he admired her playing, she had "in her head confounded the playing with the player."

The last of the only two times he had availed himself of their attentions, as they sat at supper with Browning and some others, "the youngest of the horrible family" proposed to him, in *sotto voce,* that they two should drink "a goblet of wine" together, each to the person that each loved most in the world.

"I find your toast *unegoist,*" said he, "and I accept it with pleasure." "But," said she, "when we have drunk, we will then tell each other to whom?" "Excuse me," said he, "we will, if you please, drink without conditions." Whereupon they drank; "and then this girl—what shall I say? bold, upon my honour—proposed to tell me to whom she had drunk, and trust to my telling her after. 'As you like.' 'Well, then, it was to you!' 'Really?' said I, surprised I must confess. 'Yes,' said she, pointing aloft, 'true as God exists.' 'Well,' said I, 'I find it strange.' 'Now, then,' said she, 'to whom did you drink?' 'Ah!' said I, 'that is another question;' and on this, that girl became ghastly pale, so that her sister called out, 'Nina! what is the matter with you?' and now, thank God, she has sailed to Aberdeen." Did you ever hear anything so distracted? enough to make one ask if R—— has not some grounds for his extraordinary ideas of English women.

Deceived in Her Birthday Letter

Jane Welsh Carlyle to Thomas Carlyle

Seaforth House, *Tuesday, July* 14, 1846.

Oh, my dear husband, Fortune has played me such a cruel trick this day! But it is all right now; and I do not even feel any resentment against Fortune for the suffo-

cating misery of the last two hours. I know always, even when I seem to you most exacting, that whatever happens to me is nothing like so bad as I deserve. But you shall hear all how it was.

Yesterday, in coming back from the post-office, where I had gone myself with the letter to you, my head took to aching, and ached, ached on all day in a bearable sort of fashion, till the evening, when Geraldine came over from Manchester, and the sudden bound my heart gave at the sight of her finished me off on the spot. I had to get myself put to bed, and made a bad wakeful night of it; so that this morning I was nervous, as you may figure, and despairing of all things, even of the letter from you that I expected so confidently yesterday. Encouragement came, however, from a quarter I was little dreaming of—*before* the post time, before I was dressed, in fact—Heaven knows how she had managed it—there was delivered to me a packet from—Bölte, at Cambridge—a pretty little collar and cuffs of the poor thing's own work, with the kindest letter, after all my cruelty to her! Well, I thought, if *she* can be so loving and forgiving for me, I need not be tormenting myself with the fear that *he* will not write to-day either, and I put on the collar there and then, and went down to breakfast in a little better heart.

At ten, the post hour, I slipped away myself to the post office, but was *detected* by Betsy and Geraldine, who insisted on putting on their bonnets and accompanying me. I could well have dispensed with the attention; however, I trusted there would be a letter, and their presence would only hinder me reading it for a little. And *two* were handed out which I stretched out *my* hand to receive. Both for Betsy! None for *me,* the postmistress averred!

Not a line from you on my birthday—on the fifth day! I did not burst out crying—did not faint—did not *do* any-

thing absurd, so far as I know; but I walked back again without speaking a word, and with such a tumult of wretchedness in my heart as you, who know me, can conceive. And then I shut myself in my room to fancy everything that was most tormenting. Were you finally so out of patience with me that you had resolved to write me no more at all? Had you gone to Addiscombe and found no leisure there to remember my existence? Were you taken ill, so ill that you *could* not write? That last idea made me mad to get off to the railway and back to London. Oh, mercy! what a two hours I had of it! And just when I was at my wits' end, I heard Julia crying out through the house, "Mrs. Carlyle, Mrs. Carlyle! are you there? Here is a letter for you!" And so there was, after all. The postmistress had overlooked it, and given it to Robert when he went afterwards, not knowing that we had been. I wonder what *love letter* was ever received with such thankfulness! Oh, my dear, I am not fit for living in the world with this organisation. I am as much broken to pieces by that little accident as if I had come through an attack of cholera or typhus fever. I cannot even steady my hand to *write* decently. But I felt an irresistible need of thanking you by return of post. Yes, I have kissed the dear little card-case. And now I will lie down a while and try to get some sleep, at least to quiet myself. I will try to believe—oh, why cannot I believe it once for all—that with all my faults and follies, I *am* "dearer to you than any earthly creature!" I will be better for Geraldine here; she is become very quiet and nice, and as affectionate for me as ever.

Your own
JANE CARLYLE.

Learning to Love

Charlotte Brontë to Ellen Nussey[1]

I

December 15th, 1852.

I inclose another note which, taken in conjunction with the incident immediately preceding it, and with a long series of indications whose meaning I scarce ventured hitherto to interpret to myself, much less hint to any other, has left on my mind a feeling of deep concern. This note you will see is from Mr. Nicholls.[2]

I know not whether you have ever observed him specially when staying here. Your perception is generally quick enough—*too* quick, I have sometimes thought; yet as you never said anything, I restrained my own dim misgivings, which could not claim the sure guide of vision. What papa has seen or guessed I will not inquire, though I may conjecture. He has minutely noticed all Mr. Nicholls's low spirits, all his threats of expatriation, all his symptoms of impaired health—noticed them with little

[1] Charlotte Brontë's most intimate friend.

[2] The Rev. Arthur Bell Nicholls was born in County Antrim, in 1817, of parents who were Scotch on both sides. His first curacy was Haworth, of which Charlotte Brontë's father was incumbent; hither he came in 1844. He is the Mr. Macarthey of *Shirley.* His was the fourth proposal of marriage which Charlotte Brontë received. Her first was from Henry Nussey, 1839. Her second from Mr. Price, 1839. Her third from James Taylor, the second in command to Mr. W. S. Williams as adviser to the firm of Smith Elder, 1851. After much difficulty the proposal of Mr. Nicholls was accepted, and the marriage took place June 29, 1854. March 31, 1855, Charlotte Brontë died. Mr. Nicholls remained at Haworth for the six years following his wife's death. On the death of Mr. Brontë (1777-1861), Charlotte Brontë's father, he returned to Ireland and, some years later, married again—a cousin, by name Miss Bell.

sympathy and much indirect sarcasm. On Monday evening Mr. Nicholls was here to tea. I vaguely felt without clearly seeing, as without seeing I have felt for some time, the meaning of his constant looks, and strange, feverish restraint. After tea I withdrew to the dining-room as usual. As usual, Mr. Nicholls sat with papa till between eight and nine o'clock; I then heard him open the parlour door as if going. I expected the clash of the front door. He stopped in the passage; he tapped; like lightning it flashed on me what was coming. He entered; he stood before me. What his words were you can guess; his manner you can hardly realise, nor can I forget it. Shaking from head to foot, looking deadly pale, speaking low, vehemently, yet with difficulty, he made me for the first time feel what it costs a man to declare affection where he doubts response.

The spectacle of one ordinarily so statue-like thus trembling, stirred, and overcome, gave me a kind of strange shock. He spoke of sufferings he had borne for months, of sufferings he could endure no longer, and craved leave for some hope. I could only entreat him to leave me then and promise a reply on the morrow. I asked him if he had spoken to papa. He said he dared not. I think I half led, half put him out of the room. When he was gone I immediately went to papa, and told him what had taken place. Agitation and anger disproportionate to the occasion ensued; if I had *loved* Mr. Nicholls, and had heard such epithets applied to him as were used, it would have transported me past my patience; as it was, my blood boiled with a sense of injustice. But papa worked himself into a state not to be trifled with: the veins on his temples started up like whip-cord, and his eyes became suddenly bloodshot. I made haste to promise that Mr. Nicholls should on the morrow have a distinct refusal.

I wrote yesterday and got this note. There is no need to add to this statement any comment. Papa's vehement antipathy to the bare thought of any one thinking of me as a wife, and Mr. Nicholls's distress, both give me pain. Attachment to Mr. Nicholls you are aware I never entertained, but the poignant pity inspired by his state on Monday evening, by the hurried revelation of his sufferings for many months, is something galling and irksome. That he cared something for me, and wanted me to care for him, I have long suspected, but I did not know the degree or strength of his feelings. Dear Nell, good-bye.—Yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.

II

April 6th, 1853.

You ask about Mr. Nicholls. I hear he has got a curacy, but do not know yet where. I trust the news is true. He and papa never speak. He seems to pass a desolate life. He has allowed late circumstances so to act on him as to freeze up his manner and overcast his countenance not only to those immediately concerned but to every one. He sits drearily in his rooms. If Mr. Grant or any other clergyman calls to see, and as they think, to cheer him, he scarcely speaks. I find he tells them nothing, seeks no confidant, rebuffs all attempts to penetrate his mind. I own I respect him for this. He still lets Flossy go to his rooms, and takes him to walk. He still goes over to see Mr. Sowden sometimes, and, poor fellow, that is all. He looks ill and miserable. I think and trust in Heaven that he will be better as soon as he fairly gets away from Haworth. I pity him inexpressibly. We never meet nor speak, nor dare I look at him; silent pity is just all that I can give him, and as he knows nothing about that, it does not comfort.

III

May 27th, 1853.

As to the last Sunday, it was a cruel struggle. Mr. Nicholls ought not to have had to take any duty.

He left Haworth this morning at six o'clock. Yesterday evening he called to render into papa's hands the deeds of the National School, and to say good-bye. They were busy cleaning—washing the paint, etc., in the dining-room, so he did not find me there. I would not go into the parlour to speak to him in papa's presence. He went out, thinking he was not to see me; and indeed, till the very last moment, I thought it best not. But perceiving that he stayed long before going out at the gate, and remembering his long grief, I took courage and went out, trembling and miserable. I found him leaning against the garden door in a paroxysm of anguish, sobbing as women never sob. Of course I went straight to him. Very few words were interchanged, those few barely articulate. Several things I should have liked to ask him were swept entirely from my memory. Poor fellow! But he wanted such hope and such encouragement as I could not give him. Still, I trust he must know now that I am not cruelly blind and indifferent to his constancy and grief. For a few weeks he goes to the south of England, afterwards he takes a curacy somewhere in Yorkshire, but I don't know where.

Papa has been far from strong lately. I dare not mention Mr. Nicholls's name to him. He speaks of him quietly and without opprobrium to others, but to me he is implacable on the matter. However, he is gone—gone, and there's an end of it. I see no chance of hearing a word about him in future, unless some stray shred of intelligence comes through Mr. Sowden or some other second-hand source. In all this it is not I who am to be pitied at

all, and of course nobody pities me. They all think in Haworth that I have disdainfully refused him. If pity would do Mr. Nicholls any good, he ought to have, and I believe has it. They may abuse me if they will; whether they do or not I can't tell.

IV

Haworth, *April 11th,* 1854.

Mr. Nicholls came on Monday, and was here all last week. Matters have progressed thus since July. He renewed his visit in September, but then matters so fell out that I saw little of him. He continued to write. The correspondence pressed on my mind. I grew very miserable in keeping it from papa. At last sheer pain made me gather courage to break it. I told all. It was very hard and rough work at the time, but the issue after a few days was that I obtained leave to continue the communication. Mr. Nicholls came in January; he was ten days in the neighbourhood. I saw much of him. I had stipulated with papa for opportunity to become better acquainted. I had it, and all I learnt inclined me to esteem and affection. Still papa was very, very hostile, bitterly unjust.

I told Mr. Nicholls the great obstacle that lay in his way. He has persevered. The result of this, his last visit, is, that papa's consent is gained, that his respect, I believe, is won, for Mr. Nicholls has in all things proved himself disinterested and forbearing. Certainly, I must respect him, nor can I withhold from him more than mere cool respect. In fact, dear Ellen, I am engaged.

Mr. Nicholls, in the course of a few months, will return to the curacy of Haworth. I stipulated that I would not leave papa; and to papa himself I proposed a plan of residence which should maintain his seclusion and convenience

uninvaded, and in a pecuniary sense bring him gain instead of loss. What seemed at one time impossible is now arranged, and papa begins really to take a pleasure in the prospect.

For myself, dear Ellen, while thankful to One who seems to have guided me through much difficulty, much and deep distress and perplexity of mind, I am still very calm, very inexpectant. What I taste of happiness is of the soberest order. I trust to love my husband. I am grateful for his tender love to me. I believe him to be an affectionate, a conscientious, a high-principled man; and if, with all this, I should yield to regrets that fine talents, congenial tastes and thoughts are not added, it seems to me I should be most presumptuous and thankless.

Providence offers me this destiny. Doubtless, then, it is the best for me. Nor do I shrink from wishing those dear to me one not less happy.

It is possible that our marriage may take place in the course of the summer. Mr. Nicholls wishes it to be in July. He spoke of you with great kindness, and said he hoped you would be at our wedding. I said I thought of having no other bridesmaid. Did I say rightly? I mean the marriage to be literally as quiet as possible.

Do not mention these things just yet. I mean to write to Miss Wooler shortly. Good-bye. There is a strange half-sad feeling in making these announcements. The whole thing is something other than imagination paints it beforehand; cares, fears, come mixed inextricably with hopes. I trust yet to talk the matter over with you. Often last week I wished for your presence and said so to Mr. Nicholls—Arthur, as I now call him, but he said it was the only time and place when he could not have wished to see you. Good-bye.—Yours affectionately,

C. BRONTË.

V

August 9th, 1854.

Since I came home I have not had an unemployed moment. My life is changed indeed: to be wanted continually, to be constantly called for and occupied seems so strange; yet it is a marvellously good thing. As yet I don't quite understand how some wives grow so selfish. As far as my experience of matrimony goes, I think it tends to draw you out of, and away from yourself. . . .

Dear Nell, during the last six weeks, the colour of my thoughts is a good deal changed: I know more of the realities of life than I once did. I think many false ideas are propagated, perhaps unintentionally. I think those married women who indiscriminately urge their acquaintance to marry, much to blame. For my part, I can only say with deeper sincerity and fuller significance what I always said in theory, "Wait God's will." Indeed, indeed, Nell, it is a solemn and strange and perilous thing for a woman to become a wife. Man's lot is far, far different. Tell me when you think you can come. Papa is better, but not well. How is your mother? give my love to her.—Yours faithfully,

C. B. Nicholls.

Defending Her Union with Mr. George H. Lewes

George Eliot to Mrs. Bray

September 4, 1855.

If there is any one action or relation of my life which is, and always has been, profoundly serious, it is my relation to Mr. Lewes. It is, however, natural enough that you should mistake me in many ways, for not only are you unacquainted with Mr. Lewes' real character and the course

of his actions, but also it is several years now since you and I were much together, and it is possible that the modifications my mind has undergone may be quite in the opposite direction of what you imagine. No one can be better aware than yourself that it is possible for two people to hold different opinions on momentous subjects with equal sincerity, and an equally earnest conviction that their respective opinions are alone the truly moral ones. If we differ on the subject of the marriage laws, I at least, can believe of you that you cleave to what you believe to be good; and I don't know of anything in the nature of your views that should prevent you from believing the same of me. *How far* we differ, I think we neither of us know, for I am ignorant of your precise views; and apparently you attribute to me both feelings and opinions which are not mine. We cannot set each other quite right in this matter in letters, but one thing I can tell you in a few words. Light and easily-broken ties are what I neither desire theoretically, nor could live for practically. Women who are satisfied with such ties do *not* act as I have done. That any unworldly, unsuperstitious person, who is sufficiently acquainted with the realities of life can pronounce my relation to Mr. Lewes immoral, I can only understand by remembering how subtle and complex are the influences that mould opinion. But I do remember this: and I indulge in no arrogant or uncharitable thoughts about those who condemn us, even though we might have expected a somewhat different verdict. From the majority of persons, of course, we never looked for anything but condemnation. We are leading no life of self-indulgence, except indeed, that, being happy in each other, we find everything easy. We are working hard to provide for others better than we provide for ourselves, and to fulfil every responsibility that lies upon us. Levity and pride

would not be a sufficient basis for that. Pardon me if, in vindicating myself from some unjust conclusions, I seem too cold and self-asserting. I should not care to vindicate myself if I did not love you, and desire to relieve you of the pain which you say these conclusions have given you. Whatever I may have misinterpreted before, I do not misinterpret your letter this morning, but read in it nothing else than love and kindness towards me, to which my heart fully answers yes. I should like never to write about myself again; it is not healthy to dwell on one's own feelings and conduct, but only to try and live more faithfully and lovingly every fresh day. I think not one of the endless words and deeds of kindness and forbearance you have ever shown me has vanished from my memory. I recall them often, and feel, as about everything else in the past, how deficient I have been in almost every relation of my life. But that deficiency is irrevocable, and I can find no strength or comfort, except in "pressing forward towards the things that are before," and trying to make the present better than the past. But if we should never be very near each other again, dear Cara, do bear this faith in your mind, that I was not insensible or ungrateful to all your goodness, and that I am one amongst the many for whom you have not lived in vain. I am very busy just now, and have been obliged to write hastily. Bear this in mind, and believe that no meaning is mine which contradicts my assurance that I am your affectionate and earnest friend.

II

Landscapes

Dutch landscape with figures in the foreground.

Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774)

A curious place.

Robert Southey (1774-1843)

The Coliseum.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

Ascending Vesuvius.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

Dome beyond dome, palaces and colonnades.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

"Good God, my dear fellow, have we lived to see this!"

Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

In Luther's country.

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)

He buys a Constable.

Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883)

Dutch Landscape with Figures in the Foreground

Oliver Goldsmith to his Uncle Contarine

Leyden [1754].

Dear Sir—I suppose by this time I am accused of either neglect or ingratitude, and my silence imputed to my usual slowness of writing. But believe me, Sir, when I say, that till now I had not an opportunity of sitting down with that ease of mind which writing required. You may see by the top of the letter that I am at Leyden; but of my journey hither you must be informed. Some time after the receipt of your last, I embarked for Bordeaux, on board a Scotch ship called the *St. Andrews,* Capt. John Wall, master. The ship made a tolerable appearance, and as another inducement, I was let to know that six agreeable passengers were to be my company. Well, we were but two days at sea when a storm drove us into a city of England called Newcastle-on-Tyne. We all went ashore to refresh us after the fatigue of our voyage. Seven men and I were one day on shore and on the following evening as we were all very merry, the room door bursts open: enters a sergeant and twelve grenadiers with their bayonets screwed and puts all under king's arrest. It seems my company were Scotchmen in the French service, and had been in Scotland to enlist soldiers for the French army. I endeavoured all I could to prove my innocence; however, I remained in prison with the rest a fortnight, and with difficulty got off even then. Dear Sir, keep this all a secret, or at least say it was for debt;

for if it were once known at the University, I should hardly get a degree. But hear how Providence interposed in my favour; the ship was gone on to Bordeaux before I got from prison, and was wrecked at the mouth of the Garonne, and every one of the crew were drowned. It happened the last great storm. There was a ship at that time ready for Holland. I embarked, and in nine days, thank my God, I arrived safe at Rotterdam; whence I travelled by land to Leyden; and whence I now write.

You may expect some account of this country, and though I am not well qualified for such an undertaking, yet shall I endeavour to satisfy some part of your expectations. Nothing surprises me more than the books every day published, descriptive of the manners of this country. Any young man who takes it into his head to publish his travels, visits the countries he intends to describe; passes through them with as much inattention as his *valet de chambre;* and consequently not having a fund himself to fill a volume, he applies to those who wrote before him, and gives us the manners of a country, not as he must have seen them, but such as they might have been fifty years before. The modern Dutchman is quite a different creature from him of former times; he in everything imitates a Frenchman, but in his easy disengaged air, which is the result of keeping polite company. The Dutchman is vastly ceremonious, and is perhaps exactly what a Frenchman might have been in the reign of Louis XIV. Such are the better bred. But the downright Hollander is one of the oddest figures in nature. Upon a head of lank hair he wears a half-cocked narrow hat laced with black ribbon: no coat, but seven waistcoats, and nine pairs of breeches; so that his hips reach almost up to his arm-pits. This well-clothed vegetable is now fit to see company, or make love. But what a pleasing creature is the object of his appetite?

Why, she wears a large fur cap with a deal of Flanders lace: for every pair of breeches he carries, she puts on two petticoats.

A Dutch lady burns nothing about her phlegmatic admirer but his tobacco. You must know, Sir, every woman carries in her hand a stove with cones in it, which, when she sits, she snugs under her petticoats; and at this chimney dozing Strephon lights his pipe.

I take it that this continual smoking is what gives the man the ruddy healthful complexion, by drawing his superfluous moisture, while the woman, deprived of this amusement, overflows with such viscidities as tint the complexion, and give that paleness of visage which low fenny grounds and moist air conspire to cause. A Dutch woman and Scotch will well bear an opposition.

The one pale and fat, the other lean and ruddy: the one walks as if she were straddling after a go-cart, and the other takes too masculine a stride. I shall not endeavour to deprive either country of its share of beauty; but must say, that of all objects on earth, an English farmer's daughter is most charming. Every woman there is a complete beauty, while the higher class of women want many of the requisites to make them even tolerable. Their pleasures here are very dull, though very various. You may smoke, you may doze; you may go to the Italian Comedy, as good an amusement as either of the former. This entertainment always brings in Harlequin, who is generally a magician and in consequence of his diabolical art performs a thousand tricks on the credulity of the persons of the Drama, who are all fools. I have seen the pit in a roar of laughter at this humour, when with his sword he touches the glass from which another was drinking. It was not his face they laughed at, for that was masked. They must have seen something vastly queer in

the wooden sword, that neither I, nor you, Sir, were you there, could see.

In winter, when their canals are frozen, every house is forsaken, and all people are on the ice; sleds drawn by horses, and skating, are at that time the reigning amusements.

They have boats here that slide on the ice, and are driven by the winds. When they spread all their sails they go more than a mile and a half a minute, and their motion is so rapid the eye can hardly accompany them. Their ordinary manner of travelling is very cheap and very convenient; they sail in covered boats drawn by horses; and in these you are sure to meet people of all nations. Here the Dutch slumber, the French chatter, and the English play at cards. Any man who likes company may have them to his taste. For my part I generally detached myself from all society, and was wholly taken up in observing the face of the country. Nothing can equal its beauty; wherever I turn my eye, fine houses, elegant gardens, statues, grottos, vistas, presented themselves; but when you enter their towns you are charmed beyond description. No misery is to be seen here; every one is usefully employed.

Scotland and this country bear the highest contrast. There hills and rocks intercept every prospect: here 'tis all continued plain. There you might see a well dressed duchess issuing from a dirty close; and here a dirty Dutchman inhabiting a palace. The Scotch may be compared to a tulip planted in dung; but I never see a Dutchman in his house but I think of a magnificent Egyptian temple dedicated to an ox. Physic is by no means taught here so well as in Edinburgh; and in all Leyden there are but four British students, owing to all necessaries being so extremely dear, and the professors so very lazy (the

chemical professor excepted,) that we don't much care to come hither. I am not certain how long my stay here may be; however I expect to have the happiness of seeing you at Kilmore, if I can, next March.

Direct to me, if I am honoured with a letter from you, to Madame Diallion's at Leyden.

Thou best of men, may Heaven guard and preserve you, and those you love.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

A CURIOUS PLACE

Robert Southey to Joseph Cottle

Lisbon, *February* 1, 1796.

The city is a curious place; a straggling plan; built on the most uneven ground, with heaps of ruins in the middle and large open places. The streets filthy beyond all English ideas of filth, for they throw everything into the streets, and nothing is removed. Dead animals annoy you at every corner; and such is the indolence and nastiness of the Portuguese, that I verily believe they would let each other rot, in the same manner, if the priests did not get something by burying them. Some of the friars are avowed to wear their clothes without changing for a year; and this is a comfort to them: you will not wonder, therefore, that I always keep to the windward of these reverend perfumers.

The streets are very agreeable in wet weather. If you walk under the houses, you are drenched by the waterspouts. If you attempt the middle, there is a river. If you would go between both, there is the dunghill. The rains here are very violent, and the streams in the streets, on a declivity, so rapid as to throw down men; and some-

times to overset carriages. A woman was drowned some years ago in one of the most frequented streets of Lisbon.

To-night I shall see the procession of "Our Lord of the Passion." This image is a very celebrated one, and with great reason, for one night he knocked at the door of St. Roque's church, and there they would not admit him. After this he walked to the other end of the town, to the church of St. Grace, and there they took him in; but a dispute now arose between the two churches, to which the image belonged; whether to the church which he first chose, or the church that first chose him. The matter was compromised. One church has him, and the other fetches him for their processions, and he sleeps with the latter the night preceding. The better mode for deciding it had been to take the gentleman between both, and let him walk to which he liked best. What think you of this story being believed in 1796 ! ! !

The power of the Inquisition still exists, though they never exercise it, and thus the Jews save their bacon. Fifty years ago it was the greatest delight of the Portuguese to see a Jew burnt. Geddes, the then chaplain, was present at one of these detestable Autos da Fé. He says, "The transports expressed by all ages, and all sexes, whilst the miserable sufferers were shrieking and begging mercy for God's sake, formed a scene more horrible than any out of hell!" He adds, that "this barbarity is not their national character, for no people sympathize so much at the execution of a criminal; but it is the damnable nature of their religion, and the most diabolical spirit of their priests; their celibacy deprives them of the affections of men, and their creed gives them the ferocity of devils." Geddes saw one man gagged, because immediately he came out of the Inquisition gates, he looked up at the sun, whose light for many years had never visited him, and ex-

claimed. "How is it possible for men who behold that glorious orb, to worship any being but him who created it!" My blood runs cold when I pass that accursed building; and though they do not exercise their power, it is a reproach to human nature that the building should exist.

It is as warm here as in May with you; of course we broil in that month at Lisbon; but I shall escape the hot weather here, as I did the cold weather of England, and quit this place the latter end of April. You will, of course, see me the third day after my landing at Falmouth, or, if I can get companions in a post-chaise, sooner. This my resolution is like the law of the Medes and Persians, that altereth not. Be so good as to procure for me a set of Coleridge's *Watchman,* with his Lectures and Poems. I want to write a Tragedy here, but can find no leisure to begin with.

Portugal is much plagued with robbers, and they generally strip a man, and leave him to walk home in his birthday suit. An Englishman was served thus at Almeyda, and the Lisbon magistrates, on his complaint, took up the whole village, and imprisoned them all. Contemplate this people in what light you will, you can never see them in a good one. They suffered their best epic Poet to perish for want; and they burned to death their best dramatic writer, because he was a Jew.

Yours,
ROBERT SOUTHEY.

THE COLISEUM

Percy Bysshe Shelley to T. L. Peacock

Naples, *December* 22, 1818.

Since I last wrote to you, I have seen the ruins of Rome, the Vatican, St. Peter's, and all the miracles of ancient

and modern art contained in that majestic city. The impression of it exceeds anything I have ever experienced in my travels. We stayed there only a week, intending to return at the end of February, and devote two or three months to its mines of inexhaustible contemplation, to which period I refer you for a minute account of it. We visited the Forum and the ruins of the Coliseum every day. The Coliseum is unlike any work of human hands I ever saw before. It is of enormous height and circuit, and the arches built of massy stones are piled on one another, and jut into the blue air, shattered into the forms of overhanging rocks. It has been changed by time into the image of an amphitheatre of rocky hills overgrown by the wild olive, the myrtle, and the fig-tree, and threaded by little paths, which wind among its ruined stairs and immeasurable galleries: the copsewood overshadows you as you wander through its labyrinths, and the wild weeds of this climate of flowers bloom under your feet. The arena is covered with grass, and pierces, like the skirts of a natural plain, the chasms of the broken arches around. But a small part of the exterior circumference remains—it is exquisitely light and beautiful; and the effect of the perfection of its architecture, adorned with ranges of Corinthian pilasters, supporting a bold cornice, is such as to diminish the effect of its greatness. The interior is all ruin. I can scarcely believe that even when encrusted with Dorian marble and ornamented by columns of Egyptian granite, its effect could have been so sublime and so impressive as in its present state. It is open to the sky, and it was the clear and sunny weather of the end of November in this climate when we visited it, day after day.

Near it is the arch of Constantine, or rather the arch of Trajan; for the servile and avaricious senate of degraded Rome ordered that the monument of his predecessor should

be demolished in order to dedicate one to the Christian reptile, who had crept among the blood of his murdered family to the supreme power. It is exquisitely beautiful and perfect. The Forum is a plain in the midst of Rome, a kind of desert full of heaps of stones and pits; and though so near the habitations of men, is the most desolate place you can conceive. The ruins of temples stand in and around it, shattered columns and ranges of others complete, supporting cornices of exquisite workmanship, and vast vaults of shattered domes distinct with regular compartments, once filled with sculptures of ivory or brass. The temples of Jupiter, and Concord, and Peace, and the Sun, and the Moon, and Vesta, are all within a short distance of this spot. Behold the wrecks of what a great nation once dedicated to the abstractions of the mind! Rome is a city, as it were, of the dead, or rather of those who cannot die, and who survive the puny generations which inhabit and pass over the spot which they have made sacred to eternity. In Rome, at least in the first enthusiasm of your recognition of ancient time, you see nothing of the Italians. The nature of the city assists the delusion, for its vast and antique walls describe a circumference of sixteen miles, and thus the population is thinly scattered over this space, nearly as great as London. Wide wild fields are enclosed within it, and there are grassy lanes and copses winding among the ruins, and a great green hill, lonely and bare, which overhangs the Tiber. The gardens of the modern palaces are like wild woods of cedar, and cypress, and pine, and the neglected walks are overgrown with weeds. The English burying-place is a green slope near the walls, under the pyramidal tomb of Cestius, and is, I think, the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld. To see the sun shining on its bright grass, fresh, when we first visited it, with the autumnal dews, and hear

the whispering of the wind among the leaves of the trees which have overgrown the tomb of Cestius, and the soil which is stirring in the sun-warm earth, and to mark the tombs, mostly of women and young people who were buried there, one might, if one were to die, desire the sleep they seem to sleep. Such is the human mind, and so it peoples with its wishes vacancy and oblivion.

Ascending Vesuvius

Percy Bysshe Shelley to T. L. Peacock

(*Same Letter*)

Vesuvius is, after the Glaciers, the most impressive exhibition of the energies of nature I ever saw. It has not the immeasurable greatness, the overpowering magnificence, nor, above all, the radiant beauty of the glaciers; but it has all their character of tremendous and irresistible strength. From Resina to the hermitage you wind up the mountain, and cross a vast stream of hardened lava, which is an actual image of the waves of the sea, changed into hard black stone by enchantment. The lines of the boiling flood seem to hang in the air, and it is difficult to believe that the billows which seem hurrying down upon you are not actually in motion. This plain was once a sea of liquid fire. From the hermitage we crossed another vast stream of lava, and then went on foot up the cone—this is the only part of the ascent in which there is any difficulty, and that difficulty has been much exaggerated. It is composed of rocks of lava, and declivities of ashes; by ascending the former and descending the latter, there is very little fatigue. On the summit is a kind of irregular plain, the most horrible chaos that can be imagined; riven into ghastly chasms, and heaped up with tumuli of great

stones and cinders, and enormous rocks blackened and calcined, which had been thrown from the volcano upon one another in terrible confusion. In the midst stands the conical hill from which volumes of smoke, and the fountains of liquid fire, are rolled forth forever. The mountain is at present in a slight state of eruption; and a thick heavy white smoke is perpetually rolled out, interrupted by enormous columns of an impenetrable black bituminous vapour, which is hurled up, fold after fold, into the sky with a deep hollow sound, and fiery stones are rained down from its darkness, and a black shower of ashes fell even where we sat. The lava, like the glacier, creeps on perpetually, with a crackling sound as of suppressed fire. There are several springs of lava; and in one place it rushes precipitously over a high crag, rolling down the half-molten rocks and its own overhanging waves; a cataract of quivering fire. We approached the extremity of one of the rivers of lava; it is about twenty feet in breadth and ten in height; and as the inclined plane was not rapid, its motion was very slow. We saw the masses of its dark exterior surface detach themselves as it moved, and betray the depth of the liquid flame. In the day the fire is but slightly seen; you only observe a tremulous motion in the air, and streams and fountains of white sulphurous smoke.

At length we saw the sun sink, between Capreæ and Inarime, and, as the darkness increased, the effect of the fire became more beautiful. We were, as it were, surrounded by streams and cataracts of the red and radiant fire; and in the midst, from the column of bituminous smoke shot up into the air, fell the vast masses of rock, white with the light of their intense heat, leaving behind them through the dark vapour trains of splendour. We descended by torch-light, and I should have enjoyed the scenery on my return, but they conducted me, I know not

how, to the hermitage in a state of intense bodily suffering, the worst effect of which was spoiling the pleasure of Mary and C——. Our guides on the occasion were complete savages. You have no idea of the horrible cries which they suddenly utter, no one knows why; the clamour, the vociferation, the tumult. C—— in her palanquin suffered most from it; and when I had gone on before, they threatened to leave her in the middle of the road, which they would have done had not my Italian servant promised them a beating, after which they became quiet. Nothing, however, can be more picturesque than the gestures and the physiognomies of these savage people. And when, in the darkness of night, they unexpectedly begin to sing in chorus some fragments of their wild but sweet national music, the effect is exceedingly fine.

Dome Beyond Dome, Palaces and Colonnades

Percy Bysshe Shelley to T. L. Peacock

Rome, *March* 23, 1819.

I walk forth in the purple and golden light of an Italian evening, and return by star or moonlight, through this scene. The elms are just budding, and the warm spring winds bring unknown odours, all sweet from the country. I see the radiant Orion through the mighty columns of the temple of Concord, and the mellow fading light softens down the modern buildings of the Capitol, the only ones that interfere with the sublime desolation of the scene. On the steps of the Capitol itself, stand two colossal statues of Castor and Pollux, each with his horse, finely executed, though far inferior to those of Monte Cavallo, the cast of one of which you know we saw together in London. This walk is close to our lodging, and this is my evening walk.

What shall I say of the modern city? Rome is yet the capital of the world. It is a city of palaces and temples, more glorious than those which any other city contains, and of ruins more glorious than they. Seen from any of the eminences that surround it, it exhibits domes beyond domes, and palaces, and colonnades interminably, even to the horizon; interspersed with patches of desert, and mighty ruins which stand girt by their own desolation, in the midst of the fanes of living religions and the habitations of living men, in sublime loneliness. St. Peter's is, as you have heard, the loftiest building in Europe. Externally it is inferior in architectural beauty to St. Paul's, though not wholly devoid of it; internally it exhibits littleness on a large scale, and is in every respect opposed to antique taste. You know my propensity to admire; and I tried to persuade myself out of this opinion—in vain; the more I see of the interior of St. Peter's, the less impression as a whole does it produce on me. I cannot even think it lofty, though its dome is considerably higher than any hill within fifty miles of London; and when one reflects, it is an astonishing monument of the daring energy of man. Its colonnade is wonderfully fine, and there are two fountains, which rise in spire-like columns of water to an immense height in the sky, and falling on the porphyry vases from which they spring, fill the whole air with a radiant mist, which at noon is thronged with innumerable rainbows. In the midst stands an obelisk. In front is the palace-like façade of St. Peter's, certainly magnificent; and there is produced, on the whole, an architectural combination unequalled in the world. But the dome of the temple is concealed, except at a very great distance, by the façade and the inferior part of the building, and that diabolical contrivance they call an attic.

"Good God, My Dear Fellow, Have We Lived to See This!"

Charles Dickens to John Forster

Tuesday night, 12th November, 1844.

I must not anticipate myself. But, my dear fellow, nothing in the world that ever you have heard of Venice, is equal to the magnificent and stupendous reality. The wildest visions of the Arabian Nights are nothing to the piazza of Saint Mark, and the first impression of the inside of the Church. The gorgeous and wonderful reality of Venice is beyond the fancy of the wildest dreamer. Opium couldn't build such a place, and enchantment couldn't shadow it forth in a vision. All that I have heard of it, read of it in truth or fiction, fancied of it, is left thousands of miles behind. You know that I am liable to be disappointed in such things through over-expectation, but Venice is above, beyond, out of all reach coming of near, the imagination of a man. It has never been rated high enough. It is a thing you would shed tears to see. When I came *on board* here last night (after a five miles' row in a gondola; which, somehow or other, I wasn't at all prepared for); then, from seeing the city lying, one night, upon the distant water, like a ship, I came plashing through the silent and deserted streets; I felt as if the houses were reality—the water, fever madness. But when, in the bright cold bracing day, I stood upon the piazza this morning, by Heaven the glory of the place was insupportable! And diving down from that into its wickedness and gloom—its awful prisons deep below the water; its judgment chambers, secret doors, deadly nooks, where the torches you carry with you blink as if they couldn't bear the air in which the frightful scenes were acted; and com-

ing out again into the radiant, unsubstantial Magic of the town; and diving in again, into vast churches, and old tombs—a new sensation, a new memory, a new mind came upon me. Venice is a bit of my brain from this time. My dear Forster, if you could share my transports (as you would if you were here) what would I not give. . . . I never saw the thing before that I should be afraid to describe. But to tell what Venice is, I feel to be an impossibility. And here I sit alone, writing it: with nothing to urge me on, or goad me to that estimate, which, speaking of it to anyone I loved, and being spoken to in return, would lead me to form. In the sober solitude of a famous inn; with the great bell of Saint Mark ringing twelve at my elbow; with three arched windows in my room (two stories high) looking down upon the grand canal and away, beyond, to where the sun went down to-night in a blaze; and thinking over again those silent speaking faces of Titian and Tintoretto; I swear (uncooled by any humbug I have seen) that Venice is *the* wonder and the new sensation of the world! If you could be set down in it, never having heard of it, it would still be so. With your foot upon its stones, its pictures before you, and its history in your mind, it is something past all writing of or speaking of—almost past all thinking of. You couldn't talk to me in this room, nor I to you, without shaking hands and saying 'Good God, my dear fellow, have we lived to see this!'

In Luther's Country

Thomas Carlyle to Margaret Carlyle[1]

Weimar, *Sept.* 19, 1852.

The Landgraf's high old castle, where we loitered a

[1] Margaret Carlyle was Carlyle's mother, to whom many of his best letters are addressed. It is pathetically noticeable how he

couple of hours, is now a correction-house filled with criminals and soldiers. The chamber of conference between Luther, Zwingli, etc., is used for keeping hay. The next morning brought us from Cassel to Eisenach, with its Wartburg, where Luther lay concealed translating the Bible; and there I spent one of the most interesting forenoons I ever got by travelling. Eisenach is about as big as Dumfries, a very old town but well whitewashed, all built of brick and oak with red tile roofs of amazing steepness and several grim old swag-bellied steeples and churches and palatial residences rising conspicuous over them. It stands on a perfect plain by the side of a little river, a plain smaller than Langholm and surrounded by hills which are not so high, yet of a somewhat similar character, and are all grassy and many of them thickly wooded. Directly on the south side of it there rises one hill, somewhat as Lockerbie hill is in height and position, but clothed with trim rich woods; all the way through which wind paths with prospect houses, etc. On the top of the hill stands the old Wartburg, which it takes you three-quarters of an hour to reach; an old castle—Watch Castle is the name of it—near 800 years old, where there is still a kind of garrison kept, perhaps twenty men; though it does not look like a fortress; what one sees from below being mainly two monstrous old houses, so to speak, with enormous roofs to them, comparable to two gigantic peat stacks set somewhat apart. There are other lower buildings that connect these when one gets up. There is also of course a wall all round—a donjon tower, standing like Repentance—and the Duke of Weimar, to whom the

is at pains to illustrate his description of the German scenery, that it may become more real to her, by repeated references to the familiar localities of Ecclefechan, e. g., the Tower of Repentance stood on Hoddam Hill.

place belongs, is engaged in restorations, etc., and has many masons employed on it just now. I heeded little of all they had to show, except Junker Georg's[1] chamber, which is in the nearest of the peat stacks, the one nearest Eisenach and close by the gate when you enter on your right hand. A short stair of old worn stone conducts you up. They open a door, you enter a little apartment, less than your best room at Scotsbrig, I almost think less than your smallest, a very poor low room with an old leaded lattice window; to me the most venerable of all rooms I ever entered. Luther's old oak table is there, about three feet square, and a huge fossil bone—vertebra of a mammoth—which served him for a footstool. Nothing else now in the room did certainly belong to him; but these did. I kissed his old oak table, looked out of his window —making them open it for me—down the sheer castle wall into deep chasms, over the great ranges of silent woody mountains, and thought to myself, "Here once lived for a time one of God's soldiers. Be honour given him." Luther's father and mother, painted by Cranach, are here—excellent old portraits—the father's with a dash of thrift, contention, and worldly wisdom in his old judicious, peasant countenance, the mother particularly pious, kind, true, and motherly—a noble old peasant woman. There is also Luther's self by the same Cranach; a picture infinitely superior to what your lithograph would give a notion of; a bold effectual-looking rustic man, with brown eyes and skin; with a dash of peaceable self-confidence and healthy defiance in the look of him. In fact one is called to forget the engraving in looking at this; and indeed I have since found the engraving is not from this, but from another Cranach, to which also it has no tolerable re-

[1] The name under which Luther passed when concealed there.

semblance. But I must say no more of the Wartburg. We saw the place on the plaster where he threw his inkstand—the plaster is all cut out and carried off by visitors—saw the outer staircase which is close by the door where he speaks of often hearing the Devil make noises. Poor and noble Luther! I shall never forget this Wartburg, and am right glad of it.

That afternoon, there being no train convenient, we drove to Gotha in a kind of clatch—two horsed—very cheap in these parts; a bright beautiful country and a bonny little town; belongs to Prince Albert's brother, more power to his elbow! There we lodged in sumptuous rooms in an old quiet inn; the very rooms where Napoleon lodged after being beaten at Leipzig. It seemed I slept last night where he breakfasted, if that would do much for me. At noon we came to Erfurt, a place of 30,000 inhabitants, and now a Prussian fortified town, all intersected with ditches of water for defence' sake. Streets very crooked, very narrow, houses with old overhanging walls, and still the very room in it where Martin Luther lived when a monk, and, one guide-book said, the very Bible he found in the Convent library and read in this cell. This of the Bible proved to be wrong. Luther's particular Bible is not here, but is said to be at Berlin. Nothing really of Luther's there except the poor old latticed window glazed in lead, the main panes round, and about the size of a biggish *snap,* all bound together by whirligig intervals. It looks out to the west, over mere old cloistered courts and roof-tops against a church steeple, and is itself in the second storey. Except this and Luther's old inkstand, a poor old oaken boxie with inkbottle and sand case in it now hardly sticking together, there is nothing to be seen here that actually belonged to Luther. The walls are all covered over with texts, etc., in painted letters

by a later hand. The ceiling also is ornamentally painted; and indeed the place is all altered now, and turned long ago into an orphan asylum, much of the old building gone and replaced by a new of a different figure. On one wall of the room, however, is again a portrait of Luther by Cranach, and this I found on inspection was the one your engravers had been vainly aiming at. Vainly, for this too is a noble face; the eyes not turned up in hypocritical devotion, but looking out in profound sorrow and determination, the lips too gathered in stern but affectionate firmness. He is in russet yellow boots, and the collar of his shirt is small and edged with black.

He Buys a Constable

Edward FitzGerald to F. Tennyson[1]

London, *Jan.* 16, 1841.

Dear Frederic,

I have just concluded, with all the throes of imprudent pleasure, the purchase of a large picture by Constable, of which, if I can continue in the mood, I will enclose you a sketch. It is very good: but how you and Morton would abuse it! Yet this, being a sketch, escapes some of Constable's faults, and might escape some of your censures. The trees are not splashed with that white sky-mud, which (according to Constable's theory) the Earth scatters up with her wheels in travelling so briskly round the sun; and there is a dash and felicity in the execution that gives one a thrill of good digestion in one's room, and the thought of which makes one inclined to jump over the children's heads in the streets. Yet if you could see my great

[1] Who was Lord Alfred Tennyson's eldest brother and himself a poet. In 1854, he published *Days and Hours;* in 1890, the *Isles of Greece;* in 1891, *Daphne and Other Poems.*

enormous Venetian Picture you would be extonished. Does the thought ever strike you, when looking at pictures in a house, that you are to run and jump at one, and go right through it into some behind-scene world on the other side, as Harlequins do? A steady portrait especially invites one to do so; the quietude of it ironically tempts one to outrage it: one feels it would close again over the panel, like water, as if nothing had happened. That portrait of Spedding,[1] for instance, which Laurence has given me: not swords, nor cannon, nor all the Bulls of Bashan butting at it, could, I feel sure, discompose that venerable forehead. No wonder that no hair can grow at such an altitude: no wonder that his view of Bacon's virtue is so rarefied that the common consciences of men cannot endure it. Thackeray and I occasionally amuse ourselves with the idea of Spedding's forehead: we find it somehow or other in all things, just peering out of all things: you see it in a milestone, Thackeray says. He also draws the forehead rising with a sober light over Mont Blanc, and reflected in the Lake of Geneva. We have great laughing over this. The forehead is at present in Pembrokeshire, I believe: or Glamorganshire: or Monmouthshire: it is hard to say which. It has gone to spend its Christmas there.

[1] James Spedding (1808-1881), who in 1847 refused to become Under-secretary of State in order that he might devote his life to the re-editing of Bacon's Works, which, according to Edward FitzGerald, did not require any such re-editing, and to the vindicating of his character, which could not be vindicated. Carlyle said of him, "He was the wisest man I have known."

III

The Love of Cities

"London never was so entertaining since it had a steeple or a madhouse."

Horace Walpole (1717-1797)

Elia prefers Fleet Street to Skiddaw.

Charles Lamb (1775-1835)

In exile.

Charles Lamb (1775-1835)

A prophet enters Babylon.

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)

"London Never was so Entertaining Since it had a Steeple or a Madhouse"

Horace Walpole to George Montagu, Esq.

Arlington-street, *Nov.* 20, 1763.

You are in the wrong; believe me you are in the wrong to stay in the country; London never was so entertaining since it had a steeple or a madhouse. Cowards fight duels; secretaries of state turn methodists on the Tuesday, and are expelled the play-house for blasphemy on Friday. I am not turned methodist, but patriot, and, what is more extraordinary, am not going to have a place. What is more wonderful still, lord Hardwicke has made two of his sons resign their employments. I know my letter sounds as enigmatic as Merlin's almanack: but *my* events have really happened. I had almost persuaded myself like you to quit the world; thank my stars I did not. Why I have done nothing but laugh since last Sunday; though on Tuesday I was one of a hundred and eleven, who were outvoted by three hundred; no laughing matter generally to a *true* patriot, whether he thinks his country undone or himself. Nay, I am still more absurd; even for my dear country's sake I cannot bring myself to connect with lord Hardwicke, or the duke of Newcastle, though they are in the minority—an unprecedented case, not to love everybody one despises, when they are of the same side. On the contrary, I fear I resemble a fond woman, and dote on the *dear betrayer.* In short, and to write something that you can understand, you know I have long had a partiality

for your cousin Sandwich, who has out-Sandwiched himself. He has impeached Wilkes for a blasphemous poem, and has been expelled for blasphemy himself by the beefsteak club at Covent-garden. Wilkes has been shot by Martin, and instead of being burnt at an *auto da fé,* as the bishop of Gloucester intended, is reverenced as a saint by the mob, and, if he dies, I suppose, the people will squint themselves into convulsions at his tomb, in honour of his memory. Now is not this better than feeding one's birds and one's bantams, poring one's eyes out over old histories, not half so extraordinary as the present, or ambling to squire Bencow's on one's padnag, and playing at cribbage with one's brother John and one's parson? Prithee come to town, and let us put off taking the veil for another year: besides, by this time twelvemonth we are sure the world will be a year older in wickedness, and we shall have more matter for meditation. One would not leave it methinks till it comes to the worst, and that time cannot be many months off. In the meantime, I have bespoken a dagger, in case the circumstance should grow so classic as to make it becoming to kill oneself; however, though disposed to quit the world, as I have no mind to leave it entirely, I shall put off my death to the last minute, and do nothing rashly, till I see Mr. Pitt and lord Temple place themselves in their curule chairs in St. James's-market, and resign their throats to the victors. I am determined to see them dead first, lest they should play me a trick, and be hobbling to Buckingham-house, while I am shivering and waiting for them on the banks of Lethe. Adieu!

Yours, HORATIUS.

Elia Prefers Fleet Street to Skiddaw

Charles Lamb to Manning

London, *September* 24, 1802.

My Dear Manning,—Since the date of my last letter I have been a traveller. A strong desire seized me of visiting remote regions. My first impulse was to go and see Paris. It was a trivial objection to my aspiring mind, that I did not understand a word of the language, since I certainly intend some time in my life to see Paris, and equally certainly never intend to learn the language; therefore that could be no objection. However, I am very glad I did not go, because you had left Paris (I see) before I could have set out. I believe, Stoddart promising to go with me another year prevented that plan. My next scheme (for to my restless, ambitious mind London was become a bed of thorns) was to visit the far-famed Peak in Derbyshire, where the Devil sits, they say, without breeches. *This* my purer mind rejected as indelicate. And my final resolve was a tour to the Lakes. I set out with Mary to Keswick, without giving Coleridge any notice; for my time being precious did not admit of it. He received us with all the hospitality in the world, and gave up his time to show us all the wonders of the country. He dwells upon a small hill by the side of Keswick, in a comfortable house, quite enveloped on all sides by a net of mountains: great floundering bears and monsters they seemed, all couchant and asleep. We got in in the evening, travelling in a post-chaise from Penrith, in the midst of a gorgeous sunshine, which transmuted all the mountains into colours, purple, etc., etc. We thought we had got into fairyland. But that went off (as it never came again—while we stayed we had no more fine sunsets); and we entered Coleridge's comfortable study

just in the dusk, when the mountains were all dark with clouds upon their heads. Such an impression I never received from objects of sight before, nor do I suppose I can ever again. Glorious creatures, fine old fellows, Skiddaw, etc. I never shall forget ye, how ye lay about that night, like an intrenchment; gone to bed, as it seemed for the night, but promising that ye were to be seen in the morning. Coleridge had got a blazing fire in his study; which is a large, antique, ill-shaped room, with an old-fashioned organ, never played upon, big enough for a church, shelves of scattered folios, an Æolian harp, and an old sofa, half-bed, etc. And all looking out upon the last fading view of Skiddaw and his broad-breasted brethren: what a night! Here we stayed three full weeks, in which time I visited Wordsworth's cottage, where we stayed a day or two with the Clarksons (good people and most hospitable, at whose house we tarried one day and night), and saw Lloyd. The Wordsworths were gone to Calais. They have since been in London and passed much time with us: he is now gone into Yorkshire to be married. So we have seen Keswick, Grasmere, Ambleside, Ulswater (where the Clarksons live), and a place at the other end of Ulswater—I forget the name—to which we travelled on a very sultry day, over the middle of Helvellyn. We have clambered up to the top of Skiddaw, and I have waded up the bed of Lodore. In fine, I have satisfied myself, that there is such a thing as that which tourists call *romantic,* which I very much suspected before: they make such a spluttering about it, and toss their splendid epithets around them, till they give as dim a light as at four o'clock next morning the lamps do after an illumination. Mary was excessively tired, when she got about half-way up Skiddaw, but we came to a cold rill (than which nothing can be imagined more cold, running over cold stones), and with

the reinforcement of a draught of cold water she surmounted it most manfully. Oh, its fine black head, and the bleak air atop of it, with a prospect of mountains all about, and about, making you giddy; and then Scotland afar off, and the border countries so famous in song and ballad! It was a day that will stand out, like a mountain, I am sure, in my life. But I am returned (I have now been come home near three weeks—I was a month out), and you cannot conceive the degradation I felt at first, from being accustomed to wander free as air among mountains, and bathe in rivers without being controlled by any one, to come home and *work*. I felt very *little*. I had been dreaming I was a very great man. But that is going off, and I find I shall conform in time to that state of life to which it has pleased God to call me. Besides, after all, Fleet-Street and the Strand are better places to live in for good and all than among Skiddaw. Still, I turn back to those great places where I wandered about, participating in their greatness. After all, I could not *live* in Skiddaw. I could spend a year—two, three years—among them, but I must have a prospect of seeing Fleet-Street at the end of that time, or I should mope and pine away, I know. Still, Skiddaw is a fine creature.

In Exile

Charles Lamb to William Wordsworth

p. m., January 22, 1830.

And is it a year since we parted from you at the steps of Edmonton Stage? There are not now the years that there used to be. The tale of the dwindled age of men, reported of successional mankind, is true of the same man only. We do not live a year in a year now. 'Tis a

punctum stans. The seasons pass us with indifference. Spring cheers not, nor winter heightens our gloom, Autumn hath foregone its moralities, they are hey-pass re-pass [as] in a show-box. Yet as far as last year occurs back, for they scarce show a reflex now, they make no memory as heretofore—'twas sufficiently gloomy. Let the sullen nothing pass.

Suffice it that after sad spirits prolonged thro' many of its months, as it called them, we have cast our skins, have taken a farewell of the pompous troublesome trifle called housekeeping, and are settled down into poor boarders and lodgers at next door with an old couple, the Baucis and Baucida of dull Enfield. Here we have nothing to do with our victuals but to eat them, with the garden but to see it grow, with the tax gatherer but to hear him knock, with the maid but to hear her scolded. Scot and lot, butcher, baker, are things unknown to us save as spectators of the pageant. We are fed we know not how, quietists, confiding ravens. We have the *otium pro dignitate,* a respectable insignificance. Yet in the self-condemned obliviousness, in the stagnation, some molesting yearnings of life, not quite kill'd, rise, prompting me that there was a London, and that I was of that old Jerusalem. In dreams I am in Fleetmarket, but I wake and cry to sleep again. I die hard, a stubborn Eloisa in this detestable Paraclete. What have I gained by health? intolerable dulness. What by early hours and moderate meals?—a total blank. O never let the lying poets be believed, who 'tice men from the cheerful haunts of streets—or think they mean it not of a country village. In the ruins of Palmyra I could gird myself up to solitude, or muse to the snorings of the Seven Sleepers, but to have a little teazing image of a town about one, country folks that do not look like country folks, shops two yards square, half a dozen apples

and two penn'orth of overlooked gingerbread for the lofty fruiterers of Oxford Street—and, for the immortal book and print stalls, a circulating library that stands still, where the show-picture is a last year's Valentine, and whither the fame of the last ten Scotch novels has not yet travel'd (marry, they just begin to be conscious of the Redgauntlet), to have a new plastered flat church, and to be wishing that it was but a Cathedral. The very blackguards here are degenerate. The topping gentry, stock brokers. The passengers too many to ensure your quiet, or let you go about whistling, or gaping—too few to be the fine indifferent pageants of Fleet Street. Confining, room-keeping thickest winter is yet more bearable here than the gaudy months. Among one's books at one's fire by candle one is soothed into an oblivion that one is not in the country, but with the light the green fields return, till I gaze, and in a calenture can plunge myself into Saint Giles's. O let no native Londoner imagine that health, and rest, and innocent occupation, interchange of converse sweet and recreative study, can make the country any thing better than altogether odious and detestable. A garden was the primitive prison till man with promethean felicity and boldness luckily sinn'd himself out of it. Thence follow'd Babylon, Nineveh, Venice, London, haberdashers, goldsmiths, taverns, playhouses, satires, epigrams, puns—these all came in on the town part, and the thither side of innocence. Man found out inventions.

From my den I return you condolence for your decaying sight, not for any thing there is to see in the country, but for the miss of the pleasure of reading a London newspaper. The poets are as well to listen to, any thing high may, nay must, be read out—you read it to yourself with an imaginary auditor—but the light paragraphs must be glid over by the proper eye, mouthing mumbles their gos-

samery substance. 'Tis these trifles I should mourn in fading sight. A newspaper is the single gleam of comfort I receive here, it comes from rich Cathay with tidings of mankind. Yet I could not attend to it read out by the most beloved voice. But your eyes do not get worse, I gather. O for the collyrium of Tobias enclosed in a whiting's liver to send you with no apocryphal good wishes! The last long time I heard from you, you had knock'd your head against something. Do not do so. For your head (I do not flatter) is not a nob, or the top of a brass nail, or the end of a nine-pin—unless a Vulcanian hammer could fairly batter a "Recluse" out of it, then would I bid the smirch'd god knock and knock lustily, the two-handed skinker. What a nice long letter Dorothy has written! Mary must squeeze out a line *propriâ manu,* but indeed her fingers have been incorrigibly nervous to letter-writing for a long interval. 'Twill please you all to hear that, tho' I fret like a lion in a net, her present health and spirits are better than they have been for some time past: she is absolutely three years and a half younger, as I tell her, since we have adopted this boarding plan. Our providers are an honest pair, dame Westwood and her husband—he, when the light of prosperity shined on them, a moderately thriving haberdasher within Bow Bells, retired since with something under a competence, writes himself parcel gentleman, hath borne parish offices, sings fine old sea songs at threescore and ten, sighs only now and then when he thinks that he has a son on his hands about 15, whom he finds a difficulty in getting out into the world, and then checks a sigh with muttering, as I once heard him prettily, not meaning to be heard, "I have married my daughter however,"—takes the weather as it comes, outsides it to town in severest season, and a' winter nights tells old stories not tending to literature, how comfortable to author-

rid folks! and has *one anecdote,* upon which and about forty pounds a year he seems to have retired in green old age. It was how he was a *rider* in his youth, travelling for shops, and once (not to baulk his employer's bargain) on a sweltering day in August, rode foaming into Dunstable upon a *mad horse* to the dismal and expostulary wonderment of innkeepers, ostlers, etc., who declared they would not have bestrid the beast to win the Darby. Understand the creature gall'd to death and desperation by gad flies, cormorants winged, worse than beset Inachus' daughter. This he tells, this he brindles and burnishes on a' winter's eves, 'tis his star of set glory, his rejuvenescence to descant upon. Far from me be it (*dii avertant*) to look a gift story in the mouth, or cruelly to surmise (as those who doubt the plunge of Curtius) that the inseparate conjuncture of man and beast, the centaur-phenomenon that stagger'd all Dunstable, might have been the effect of unromantic necessity, that the horse-part carried the reasoning, willy nilly, that needs must when such a devil drove, that certain spiral configurations in the frame of Thomas Westwood unfriendly to alighting, made the alliance more forcible than voluntary. Let him enjoy his fame for me, nor let me hint a whisper that shall dismount Bellerophon. Put case he was an involuntary martyr, yet if in the fiery conflict he buckled the soul of a constant haberdasher to him, and adopted his flames, let Accident and He share the glory! You would all like Thomas Westwood.

How weak is painting to describe a man! Say that he stands four feet and a nail high by his own yard measure,

which like the Sceptre of Agamemnon shall never sprout again, still you have no adequate idea, nor when I tell you that his dear hump, which I have favour'd in the picture, seems to me of the Buffalo—indicative and repository of mild qualities, a budget of kindnesses, still you have not the man. Knew you old Norris of the Temple, 60 years ours and our father's friend, he was not more natural to us than this old W. the acquaintance of scarce more weeks. Under his roof now ought I to take my rest, but that back-looking ambition tells me I might yet be a Londoner. Well, if we ever do move, we have encumbrances the less to impede us: all our furniture has faded under the auctioneer's hammer, going for nothing like the tarnish'd frippery of the prodigal, and we have only a spoon or two left to bless us. Clothed we came into Enfield, and naked we must go out of it. I would live in London shirtless, bookless.

A Prophet Enters Babylon

Thomas Carlyle to Dr. Carlyle

Cheyne Row, Chelsea, London, *June* 17, 1834.

My dear Brother,—You can fancy what weary lonesome wanderings I had, through the dirty suburbs, and along the burning streets, under a fierce May sun with east wind; "seeking through the natives for some habitation"! At length Jane sent me comfortable tidings of innumerable difficulties overcome; and finally (in, I think, the fourth week) arrived herself; with the Furniture all close following her, in one of Pickford's Trade-boats. I carried her to certain of the hopefullest looking houses I had fallen in with, and a toilsome time we anew had: however, it was not long; for, on the second inspection, this old Chelsea Mansion pleased very decidedly, far better than any other

we could see; and, the people also whom it belongs to proving reasonable, we soon struck a bargain, and in three days more (precisely this very week) a Hackney Coach, loaded to the roof and beyond it with luggage and live-passengers, tumbled us all down here about eleven in the morning. By "all" I mean my Dame and myself; Bessy Barnet, who had come the night before; and—little *Chico,* the Canary-bird, who *multum jactatus* did nevertheless arrive living and well from Puttock, and even sang violently all the way by sea or land, nay struck up his *lilt* in the very London streets wherever he could see green leaves and feel the free air. There then we sat on three trunks; I, however, with a matchbox soon lit a cigar, as Bessy did a fire; and thus with a kind and cheerful solemnity we took possession by "raising reek," and even dined, in an extempore fashion, on a box-lid covered with some accidental towel. At two o'clock the Pickfords did arrive; and *then* began the hurly-burly; which even yet is but grown quieter, will not grow quiet, for a fortnight to come.

However, the rooms and two bedrooms are now in a partially civilised state; the broken Furniture is mostly mended; I have my old writing-table again (here) *firm* as Atlas; a large wainscoted drawing-room (which is to be my study) with the "red carpet" tightly spread on it; my Books all safe in Presses; the Belisarius Picture right in front of me over the mantelpiece (most suitable to its new wainscot lodging), and my beloved *Segretario Ambulante* right behind, with the two old Italian engravings, and others that I value less, dispersed around; and so, opposite the middle of my three windows, with little but huge Scotch elm-trees looking in on one, and in the distances an ivied House, and a sunshiny sky bursting out from genial rain. I sit here already very much at home, and impart to my dear and true brother a thankfulness which he is

sure to share in. We have indeed very much reason to be thankful every way.

With the House we are all highly pleased, and, I think, the better, the longer we know it hitherto. I know not if you ever were at Chelsea, especially at Old Chelsea, of of which this is a portion. It stretches from Battersea Bridge (a queer wooden structure, where they charge you a half-penny) along the bank of the River, Westward a little way; and Eastward (which is our side) some quarter of a mile, forming a "Cheyne Walk" (pronounced *Chainie* walk) of really grand old brick mansions, dating perhaps from Charles II.'s time ("Don Saltero's Coffeehouse" of the *Tatler* is still fresh and brisk among them), with flagged pavement; carriage way between two rows of stub-born looking high old pollarded trees; and then the river with its varied small craft, fast moving or safe-moored, and the wholesome smell (among the breezes) of sea *tar*. Cheyne Row (or Great Cheyne Row, when we wish to be grand) runs up at right angles from this, has two twenty Houses of the same fashion; Upper Cheyne Row (where Hunt lives) turning *again* at right angles, some stone-cast from this door.

Frontwards we have the outlook I have described already (or if we shove out our head, the River is disclosed some hundred paces to the left); backwards, from the ground floor, our own gardenkin (which I with new garden-tools am actively re-trimming every morning), and, from all other floors, nothing but leafy clumps, and green fields, and red high peaked roofs glimmering through them: a most clear, pleasant prospect, in these fresh westerly airs! Of London nothing visible but Westminster Abbey and the topmost dome of St. Paul's; other faint ghosts of spires (one other at least) disclose themselves, as the smoke-clouds shift; but I have not yet made out what they are,

At night we are pure and silent, almost as at Puttock; and the gas-light shimmer of the great Babylon hangs stretched from side to side of our horizon. . . . On the whole I fear nothing. There are funds here already to keep us going above a year, independently of all incomings: before that we *may* have seen into much, tried much, and succeeded somewhat.

"God's providence they cannot hinder thee of": that is the thing I always repeat to myself, or know without repeating. . . . God bless you, dear Brother! *Vale mei memor.*

T. Carlyle.

IV

Criticising the Critics

His hatred of mawkish popularity.

John Keats (1795-1821)

Concerning the scandalous critiques of Endymion in *Blackwood* and the *Quarterly Review.*

John Keats (1795-1821)

The parable of the drummer-boy.

John Keats (1795-1821)

In defence of Keats.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

Lavengro and his wife, being aroused, proclaim war.

Mr. and Mrs. George Borrow (1803-1881)

His Hatred of Mawkish Popularity

John Keats to J. H. Reynolds

Teignmouth, *April* 9, 1818.

My dear Reynolds,—

Since you all agree that the thing is bad, it must be so[1]—though I am not aware that there is anything like Hunt in it (and if there is, it is my natural way, and I have something in common with Hunt). Look over it again, and examine into the motives, the seeds, from which every one sentence sprang.

I have not the slightest feeling of humility towards the public, or to anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of great Men. When I am writing for myself, for the mere sake of the moment's enjoyment, perhaps nature has its course with me; but a Preface is written to the public—a thing I cannot help looking upon as an enemy, and which I cannot address without feelings of hostility. If I write a Preface in a supple or subdued style, it will not be in character with me as a public speaker.

I would be subdued before my friends, and thank them for subduing me; but among multitudes of men I have no feel of stooping; I hate the idea of humility to them.

I never wrote one single line of poetry with the least shadow of public thought.

Forgive me for vexing you, and making a Trojan horse

[1] The first preface to Endymion. Within twenty-four hours he had reconsidered the matter here discussed, and had written the beautiful apology which now stands as preface.

of such a trifle, both with respect to the matter in question, and myself; but it eases me to tell you: I could not live without the love of my friends; I would jump down Ætna for any great public good, but I hate a mawkish popularity. I cannot be subdued before them. My glory would be to daunt and dazzle the thousand jabberers about pictures and books. I see swarms of porcupines with their quills erect "like lime-twigs set to catch my winged book," and I would fright them away with a touch. You will say my Preface is not much of a touch. It would have been too insulting "to begin from Jove," and I could not (set) a golden head upon a thing of clay. If there is any fault in the Preface, it is not affection, but an undersong of disrespect to the public. If I write another Preface, it must be done without a thought of those people. I will think about it. If it should not reach you in four or five days, tell Taylor to publish it without a Preface, and let the Dedication simply stand—"Inscribed to the Memory of Thomas Chatterton."

Concerning the Scandalous Critiques of Endymion in Blackwood and The Quarterly Review

John Keats to James Augustus Hessey

9 *October,* 1818.

My dear Hessey,

You are very good in sending me the letters from the *Chronicle*—and I am very bad in not acknowledging such a kindness sooner—pray forgive me. It has so chanced that I have had that paper every day—I have seen to-day's. I cannot but feel indebted to those gentlemen who have taken my part. As for the rest, I begin to get a little acquainted with my own strength and weakness.—Praise or

blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own Works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what Blackwood or the Quarterly could possibly inflict—and also when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary reperception and ratification of what is fine. J. S. is perfectly right in regard to the slip-shod Endymion. That it is so is no fault of mine. No!—though it may sound a little paradoxical. It is as good as I had power to make it—by myself. Had I been nervous about its being a perfect piece, and with that view asked advice, and trembled over every page, it would not have been written; for it is not in my nature to fumble—I will write independently.—I have written independently *without Judgment.* I may write independently, and *with Judgment,* hereafter. The Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man: It cannot be matured by law and precept, but by sensation and watchfulness in itself. That which is creative must create itself. In "Endymion," I leaped headlong into the sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the Soundings, the quicksands, and the rocks, than if I had stayed upon the green shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea and comfortable advice. I was never afraid of failure; for I would sooner fail than not be among the greatest. But I am nigh getting into a rant. So, with remembrances to Taylor and Woodhouse, etc., I am

Yours very sincerely

JOHN KEATS.

The Parable of the Drummer-Boy

John Keats to John Taylor

Winchester, 23 *August,* 1819.

My dear Taylor,

. . . Brown and I have together been engaged (this I should wish to remain secret) on a Tragedy which I have just finished and from which we hope to share moderate profits. . . . I feel every confidence that, if I choose, I may be a popular writer. That I will never be; but for all that I will get a livelihood. I equally dislike the favour of the public with the love of a woman. They are both a cloying treacle to the wings of Independence. I shall ever consider them (People) as debtors to me for verses, not myself to them for admiration—which I can do without. I have of late been indulging my spleen by composing a preface at them: after all resolving never to write a preface at all. "There are so many verses," would I have said to them, "give so much means for me to buy pleasure with, as a relief to my hours of labour."—You will observe at the end of this, if you put down the letter, "How a solitary life engenders pride and egotism!" True—I know it does; but this pride and egotism will enable me to write finer things than anything else could—so I will indulge it. Just so much as I am humbled by the genius above my grasp am I exalted and look with hate and contempt upon the literary world.—A drummer-boy who holds out his hand familiarly to a field-marshal,—that drummer-boy with me is the good word and favour of the public. Who could wish to be among the common-place crowd of the little famous—who are each individually lost in a throng made up of themselves? Is this worth louting or playing the hypocrite for? To beg suffrages for a seat on

the benches of a myriad-aristocracy in letters? This is not wise—I am not a wise man. 'Tis pride—I will give you a definition of a proud man. He is a man who has neither Vanity nor Wisdom—one filled with hatreds cannot be vain, neither can he be wise. Pardon me for hammering instead of writing. Remember me to Woodhouse, Hessey, and all in Percy Street.

Ever yours sincerely
JOHN KEATS.

IN DEFENCE OF KEATS

Percy Bysshe Shelley to the Editor of the Quarterly Review [1]

1820.

SIR,—

Should you cast your eye on the signature of this letter before you read the contents, you might imagine that they related to a slanderous paper which appeared in your *Review* some time since. I never notice anonymous attacks. The wretch who wrote it has doubtless the additional reward of a consciousness of his motives, besides the thirty guineas a sheet or whatever it is that you pay him. Of course you cannot be answerable for all the writings which you edit, and I certainly bear you no ill-will for having edited the abuse to which I allude—indeed, I was too much amused by being compared to Pharaoh, not readily to forgive editor, printer, publisher, stitcher, or any one, except the despicable writer, connected with something too exquisitely entertaining. Seriously speaking, I am not in the habit of permitting myself to be disturbed by what is said or written of me, though, I dare say, I may be condemned sometimes justly enough. But I feel, in re-

[1] This letter was never sent.

spect to the writer in question, that "I am there sitting, where he durst not soar."

The case is different with the unfortunate subject of this letter, the author of *Endymion,* to whose feelings and situations I entreat you to allow me to call your attention. I write considerably in the dark; but if it is Mr. Gifford that I am addressing, I am persuaded that, in an appeal to his humanity and justice, he will acknowledge the *fas ab hoste doceri.* I am aware that the first duty of a reviewer is towards the public, and I am willing to confess that the *Endymion* is a poem considerably defective, and that, perhaps, it deserved as much censure as the pages of your *Review* record against it; but, not to mention that there is a certain contemptuousness of phraseology from which it is difficult for a critic to abstain, in the review of *Endymion,* I do not think that the writer has given it its due praise. Surely the poem, with all its faults, is a very remarkable production for a man of Keats' age, and the promise of ultimate excellence is such as has rarely been afforded even by such as have afterwards attained high literary eminence. Look at Book II., line 833, etc., and Book III., line 113 to 120; read down that page, and then again from line 195. I could cite many other passages, to convince you that it deserved milder usage. Why it should have been reviewed at all, excepting for the purpose of bringing its excellences into notice, I cannot conceive, for it was very little read, and there was no danger that it should become a model to the age of that false taste with which I confess that it is replenished.

Poor Keats was thrown into a dreadful state of mind by this review, which, I am persuaded, was not written with any intention of producing the effect, to which it has, at least, greatly contributed, of embittering his existence, and inducing a disease, from which there are now but faint

hopes of his recovery. The first effects are described to me to have resembled insanity, and it was by assiduous watching that he was restrained from effecting purposes of suicide.[1] The agony of his sufferings at length produced the rupture of a blood vessel in the lungs, and the usual process of consumption appears to have begun. He is coming to pay me a visit in Italy;[2] but I fear that, unless his mind can be kept tranquil, little is to be hoped from the mere influence of climate.

But let me not extort anything from your pity. I have just seen a second volume,[3] published by him evidently in careless despair. I have desired my bookseller to send you a copy, and allow me to solicit your especial attention to the fragment of a poem entitled *Hyperion,* the composition of which was checked by the Review in question. The great proportion of this piece is surely in the very highest style of poetry. I speak impartially, for the canons of taste to which Keats has conformed in his other compositions are the very reverse of my own. I leave you to judge for yourself; it would be an insult to you to suppose that, from motives however honourable, you would lend yourself to a deception of the public.

Lavengro and His Wife, being Aroused, Proclaim War

Mr. and Mrs. George Borrow to John Murray[4]

January 29, 1855.

Dear Mr. Murray,—

We have received your letters. In the first place I beg

[1] Shelley was misinformed as to the cause of the illness of Keats, which was the madness of love.

[2] Keats went to Rome and there died and was buried. He never visited Shelley.

[3] *Lamia and Other Poems,* published 1820.

[4] The letter was partly written by Mrs. Borrow at her hus-

leave to say something on a very principal point. You talk about *conditions* of publishing. Mr. Borrow has not the slightest wish to publish the book *Romany Rye.* The MS. was left with you because you wished to see it, and when left you were particularly requested not to let it pass out of your own hands. But it seems you have shown it to various individuals whose opinions you repeat. What those opinions are worth may be gathered from the following fact.

The book is one of the most learned works ever written; yet in the summary of the opinions which you give, not one single allusion is made to the learning which pervades the book, no more than if it contained none at all. It is treated just as if all the philological and historical facts were mere inventions, and the book a common novel. . . .

With regard to *Lavengro* it is necessary to observe that if ever a book experienced infamous and undeserved treatment it was that book. It was (assailed by every trumpery creature who hated Mr. Borrow on account of his reputation and acquirements)[1] attacked in every form that envy and malice could suggest, on account of Mr. Borrow's acquirements and the success of the *Bible in Spain,* and it was deserted by those whose duty it was, in some degree, to have protected it. No attempt was ever made to refute the vile calumny that it was a book got up against the Popish agitation of '51. It was written years previous to that period —a fact of which none is better aware than the Publisher.

band's dictation, partly by Borrow himself, but was signed by Mrs. Borrow. It accounts for the delay in the publication of *Romany Rye,* which did not take place until 1857, although promised since the appearance of *Lavengro* in 1851.

[1] The portion in parenthesis was erased, Mr. Borrow writing over it what follows with his own hand.

Is that calumny to be still permitted to go unanswered?[1] (The following in Borrow's handwriting.)

If these suggestions are attended to, well and good; if not Mr. Borrow can bide his time. He is independent of the public and of everybody. Say no more on that Russian subject. Mr. Borrow has had quite enough of the Press. If he wrote a book on Russia, it would be said to be like the *Bible in Spain,* or it would be said to be *un*like the *Bible in Spain,* and would be blamed in either case. He has written a book in connexion with England such as no other body could have written, and he now rests from his labours. He has found England an ungrateful country. It owes much to him, and he owes nothing to it. If he had been a low ignorant impostor, like a person he could name, he would have been employed and honoured.

(In the handwriting of Mrs. B.)—I remain—Yours sincerely,

MARY BORROW.

[1] No calumny at all (writes Dr. Knapp), but a natural inference, and one which Mr. Murray and Mr. Woodfall both noted in their letters to Borrow, before the reviewers proclaimed it.

V

The Artist and His Art

The general intention of "The Faëry Queen."

Edmund Spenser (1552?-1599)

"The chief end I propose to myself in all my labours, is to vex the world."

Dean Swift (1667-1745)

An author's contempt for contemporary authors.

Horace Walpole (1717-1797)

He believes in himself.

William Blake (1757-1827)

How he came to write "The Lay of the Last Minstrel."

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)

Elia paints for a Quaker friend the joys of living by literature.

Charles Lamb (1775-1835)

Sneering at the British public.

Lord Byron (1788-1824)

Confident of his future fame.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

England's greatest lyric poet explains his art.

John Keats (1795-1821)

The pleasures of literature and state-craft compared.

Lord Macaulay (1800-1859)

Agonising over Cromwell's letters.

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)

How Athens taught her historians to write.

Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883)

What it means to be a painter.

James Smetham (1821-1889)

He is content to watch the Galley of Fame go by.—But why is not Dante Gabriel Rossetti aboard?

James Smetham (1821-1889)

Uttering his heart about the public—and some other things beside.

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

The General Intention of "The Faëry Queen"

Edmund Spenser to Sir Walter Raleigh

Januarie 23, 1589.

Sir,—

Knowing how doubtfully all Allegories may be construed, and the booke of mine, which I have entituled *The Faëry Queene,* being a continued Allegorie, or darke conceit, I have thought good, as well for avoyding of jealous opinions and misconstructions, as also for your better light in reading thereof, (being so by you commanded) to discover unto you the generall intention and meaning, which in the whole course thereof I have fashioned, without expressing of any particular purposes, or by-accidents therein occasioned. The generall end therefore of all the booke, is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline. Which for that I conceived shoulde be most plausible and pleasing, beeing coloured with an historicall fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read, rather for varietie of matter than for profit of the ensample: I chose the historie of king Arthure, as most fit for the excellencie of his person, beeing made famous by many men's former workes, and also furthest from the danger of envie, and suspicion of present time. In which I have followed all the antique poets historicall: first Homer, who in the persons of Agamemnon and Ulysses hath ensampled a good governour and a vertuous man, the one in his Ilias, the other in his Odysseis: then Virgil, whose like intention was to doe in the person of Æneas: after him Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando: and

lately Tasso dissevered them againe, and formed both parts in two persons, namely, that part which they in philosophy call *Ethice,* or vertues of a private man, coloured in his Rinaldo; the other named *Politice,* in his Godfredo. By ensample of which excellent Poets, I labour to pourtraict in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve private morall vertues, as Aristotle hath devised; the which is the purpose of these first twelve bookes: which if I finde to be well accepted, I may be perhaps encoraged to frame the other part of the pollitike vertues in his person, after he came to bee king.

To some, I know, this Methode will seem displeasant, which had rather have good discipline delivered plainly in way of precepts, or sermoned at large, as they use, then thus clowdily enwrapped in Allegoricall devises. But such, mee seeme, should be satisfied with the use of these dayes, seeing all things accounted by their showes, and nothing esteemed of, that is not delightfull and pleasing to common sense. For this cause is Xenophon preferred before Plato, for that the one, in the exquisite depth of his judgment, formed a Communewealth such as it should be; but the other, in the person of Cyrus and the Persians, fashioned a government, such as might best be. So much profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample then by rule. So have I laboured to doe in the person of Arthure: whom I conceive, after his long education by Timon (to whom he was by Merlin delivered to be brought up, so soone as he was borne of the Lady Igrayne) to have seene in a dreame or vision the Faery Queene, with whose excellent beautie ravished, hee awaking, resolved to seeke her out: and so, being by Merlin armed, and by Timon thoroughly instructed, he went to seeke her forth in Faery land.

"The Chief End I Propose to Myself in all My Labours, is to Vex the World"

Dean Swift to Alexander Pope

September 29, 1725.

I have employed my time (besides ditching) in finishing, correcting, amending, and transcribing my *Travels* (*Gulliver's*), in four parts complete, newly augmented and intended for the press when the world shall deserve them, or rather when a printer shall be found brave enough to venture his ears. I like the scheme of our meeting after distresses and dispersions.

But the chief end I propose to myself in all my labours, is to vex the world, rather than divert it; and if I could compass that design without hurting my own person or fortune, I would be the most indefatigable writer you have ever seen without reading. I am exceedingly pleased that you have done with translations. Lord Treasurer Oxford often lamented that a rascally world should lay you under a necessity of misemploying your genius for so long a time. But since you will now be so much better employed, when you think of the world, give it one lash the more at my request.

I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities; and all my love is towards individuals.

For instance, I hate the tribe of lawyers; but I love Counsellor Such-a-one, and Judge Such-a-one.

It is so with physicians. I will not speak of my own trade, soldiers, English, Scotch, French, and the rest.

But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth. This is the system upon which I have governed

myself many years (but do not tell), and so I shall go on until I have done with them.

I have got materials toward a treatise proving the falsity of that definition *animal rationale*, and to show it should be only *rationis capax*. Upon this great foundation of misanthropy (though not in Timon's manner) the whole building of my travels is erected; and I never will have peace of mind till all honest men are of my opinion.

By consequence you are to embrace it immediately, and procure that all who deserve my esteem may do so too.

The matter is so clear, that it will admit of no dispute; nay, I will hold a hundred pounds that you and I agree in the point.

An Author's Contempt for Contemporary Authors

Horace Walpole to ——

Arlington Street, *April* 27, 1773.

Mr. Gough wants to be introduced to me! Indeed! I would see him, as he has been mid-wife to Masters;[1] but he is so dull that he would only be troublesome—and besides, you know I shun authors, and would never have been one myself, if it obliged me to keep such bad company. They are always in earnest, and think their profession serious, and will dwell upon trifles, and reverence learning. I laugh at all these things, and write only to laugh at them and divert myself. None of us are authors of any consequence, and it is the most ridiculous of all vanities to be vain of being *mediocre*. A page in a great author humbles me to the dust, and the conversation of those that are not superior to myself reminds me of what will be thought of

[1] Robert Masters, historian and antiquarian (1713-98). In 1771, he published *Some Remarks on Mr. Walpole's Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of Richard III.*

myself. I blush to flatter them; or to be flattered by them; and should dread letters being published some time or other, in which they would relate our interviews, and we should appear like those puny conceited witlings in Shenstone's and Hughes's correspondence, who give themselves airs from being in possession of the soil of Parnassus for the time being; as peers are proud because they enjoy the estates of great men who went before them. Mr. Gough is very welcome to see Strawberry-hill, or I would help him to any scraps in my possession that would assist his publications, though he is one of those industrious who are only re-burying the dead—but I cannot be acquainted with him; it is contrary to my system and my humour; and besides I know nothing of barrows and Danish entrenchments, and Saxon barbarisms and Phœnician characters—in short, I know nothing of those ages that knew nothing—then how should I be of use to modern literati? All the Scotch metaphysicians have sent me their works. I did not read one of them, because I do not understand what is not understood by those that write about it; and I did not get acquainted with one of the writers. I should like to be intimate with Mr. Anstey,[1] even though he wrote *Lord Buckhorse,* or with the author of the *Heroic Epistle*—I have no thirst to know the rest of my contemporaries, from the absurd bombast of Dr. Johnson down to the silly Dr. Goldsmith, though the latter changeling has had bright gleams of parts, and the former had sense, till he changed it for words, and sold it for a pension. Don't think me scornful. Recollect that I have seen Pope, and lived with Gray. Adieu!

[1] Christopher Anstey, author of the *New Bath Guide.* Among other works Anstey published *The Patriot,* a "Pindaric Epistle" on prize-fighting, addressed to Buckhorse, a notorious bruiser,

He Believes in Himself

William Blake to Thomas Butts

Felpham, *November* 22, 1802.

Dear Sir,—My brother tells me that he fears you are offended with me. I fear so too, because there appears some reason why you might be so; but when you have heard me out, you will not be so.

I have now given two years to the intense study of those parts of the art which relate to light and shade and colour, and am convinced that either my understanding is incapable of comprehending the beauties of colouring, or the pictures which I painted for you are equal in every part of the art, and superior in one, to anything that has been done since the age of Raphael.

All Sir J. Reynolds' Discourses to the Royal Academy will show that the Venetian finesse in art can never be united with the majesty of colouring necessary to historical beauty; and in a letter to the Rev. Mr. Gilpin, author of a work on picturesque scenery, he says thus:

"It may be worth consideration whether the epithet picturesque is not applicable to the excellences of the inferior schools rather than to the higher."

"The works of Michael Angelo, Raphael, etc., appear to me to have nothing of it; whereas Rubens and the Venetian painters may almost be said to have nothing else."

"Perhaps *picturesque* is somewhat synonymous to the word taste, which we should think improperly applied to Homer or Milton, but very well to Prior or Pope. I suspect that the application of these words is to excellences of an inferior order, and which are incompatible with the grand style. You are certainly right in saying that variety

of tints and forms is picturesque; but it must be remembered, on the other hand, that the reverse of this (*uniformity of colour* and a *long continuation of lines*) produces grandeur."

So says Sir Joshua, and so say I; for I have now proved that the parts of the art which I neglected to display, in those little pictures and drawings which I had the pleasure and profit to do for you, are incompatible with the designs.

There is nothing in the art which our painters do that I can confess myself ignorant of. I also know and understand, and can assuredly affirm, that the works I have done for you are equal to the Caracci or Raphael (and I am now some years older than Raphael was when he died). I say they are equal to Caracci or Raphael, or else I am blind, stupid, ignorant, and incapable, in two years' study, to understand those things which a boarding-school miss can comprehend in a fortnight. Be assured, my dear friend, that there is not one touch in those drawings and pictures but what came from my head and my heart in unison; that I am proud of being their author, and grateful to you my employer; and that I look upon you as the chief of my friends, whom I would endeavour to please, because you, among all men, have enabled me to produce these things. I would not send you a drawing or a picture till I had again reconsidered my notions of art, and had put myself back as if I was a learner.

I have proved that I am right, and shall now go on with the vigour I was, in my childhood, famous for. But I do not pretend to be perfect: yet, if my works have faults, Caracci's, Correggio's, and Raphael's have faults also.

Let me observe that the yellow-leather flesh of old men, the ill-drawn and ugly old women, and, above all, the daubed black-and-yellow shadows that are found in most fine, ay, and the finest pictures, I altogether reject as

ruinous to effect, though connoisseurs may think otherwise.

Let me also notice that Caracci's pictures are not like Correggio's, nor Correggio's like Raphael's; and, if neither of them was to be encouraged till he did like any of the others, he must die without encouragement. My pictures are unlike any of these painters, and I would have them to be so. I think the manner I adopt more perfect than any other. No doubt they thought the same of theirs. You will be tempted to think that, as I improve, the pictures, etc., that I did for you are not what I would now wish them to be.

On this I beg to say that they are what I intended them, and that I know I never shall do better; for, if I were to do them over again, they would lose as much as they gained, because they were done in the heat of my spirits.

But you will justly inquire why I have not written all this time to you. I answer I have been very unhappy, and could not think of troubling you about it, or any of my real friends. (I have written many letters to you which I burned and did not send.) And why I have not before now finished the miniature I promised to Mrs. Butts, I answer I have not, till now, in any degree pleased myself, and now I must entreat you to excuse faults, for portrait-painting is the direct contrary to designing and historical painting, in every respect.

If you have not nature before you for every touch, you cannot paint portrait; and if you have nature before you at all, you cannot paint history. It was Michael Angelo's opinion, and is mine.

Pray give my wife's love with mine to Mrs. Butts. Assure her that it cannot be long before I have the pleasure of painting from you in person, and then she may expect a likeness. But now I have done all I could, and know she will forgive any failure in consideration of the endeavour.

And now let me finish with assuring you that, though I have been very unhappy, I am so no longer. I am again emerged into the light of day; I still and shall to eternity embrace Christianity, and adore Him who is the express image of God; but I have travelled through perils and darkness not unlike a champion. I have conquered, and shall go on conquering. Nothing can withstand the fury of my course among the stars of God and in the abysses of the accuser.

My enthusiasm is still what it was, only enlarged and confirmed.

I now send two pictures, and hope you will approve of them.

I have enclosed the account of money received and work done, which I ought long ago to have sent you. Pray forgive errors in omissions of this kind. I am incapable of many attentions which it is my duty to observe towards you, through multitude of employment, and through hope of soon seeing you again. I often omit to inquire of you, but pray let me now hear how you do, and of the welfare of your family.

Accept my sincere love and respect.—I remain yours sincerely,

WILLIAM BLAKE.

How He Came to Write "The Lay of the Last Minstrel"

Sir Walter Scott to Miss Seward

Edinburgh, *March* 21, 1805.

MY DEAR MISS SEWARD,—

I am truly happy that you found any amusement in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel.* It has great faults, of which no one can be more sensible than I am myself. Above all, it

is deficient in that sort of continuity which a story ought to have, and which, were it to be written again, I would endeavour to give it. But I began and wandered forward, like one in a pleasant country, getting to the top of one hill to see a prospect, and to the bottom of another to enjoy a shade; and what wonder if my course has been devious and desultory, and many of my excursions altogether unprofitable to the advance of my journey? The Dwarf Page is also an excrescence, and I plead guilty to all the censures concerning him. The truth is, he has a history, and it is this:—The story of Gilpin Horner was told by an old gentleman to Lady Dalkeith, and she, much diverted with his actually believing so grotesque a tale, insisted that I should make it into a Border ballad. I don't know if ever you saw my lovely chieftainess—if you have, you must be aware that it is impossible for any one to refuse her request, and she has more of the angel in face and temper than any one alive; so that if she had asked me to write a ballad on a broomstick, I must have attempted it. I began a few verses to be called the Goblin Page; and they lay long by me, till the applause of some friends whose judgment I valued induced me to resume the poem, so on I wrote, knowing no more than the man in the moon how I was to end. At length the story appeared so uncouth, that I was fain to put it into the mouth of my old minstrel, lest the nature of it should be misunderstood, and I should be suspected of setting up a new school of poetry, instead of a feeble attempt to imitate the old. In the process of the romance, the page, intended to be a principal person in the work, contrived (from the baseness of his natural propensities, I suppose) to slink downstairs into the kitchen, and now he must e'en abide there.

I mention these circumstances to you, and to any one whose applause I value, because I am unwilling you should

suspect me of trifling with the public in *malice prepense*. As to the herd of critics, it is impossible for me to pay much attention to them; for, as they do not understand what I call poetry, we talk in a foreign language to each other. Indeed, many of these gentlemen appear to me to be a sort of thinkers, who, unable to make pots and pans, set up for menders of them, and, God knows, often make two holes in patching one. The sixth canto is altogether redundant; for the poem should certainly have closed with the union of the lovers, when the interest, if any, was at an end. But what could I do? I had my book and my page still on my hands, and must get rid of them at all events. Manage them as I would, their catastrophe must have been insufficient to occupy an entire canto; so I was fain to eke it out with songs of the Minstrels. I will now descend from the confessional, which I think I have occupied long enough for the patience of my fair confessor. I am happy you are disposed to give me absolution, notwithstanding all my sins.

Elia Paints for a Quaker Friend the Joys of Living by Literature

Charles Lamb to Bernard Barton[1]

January 9, 1823.

Throw yourself on the world without any rational plan of support, beyond what the chance employ of booksellers would afford you!

Throw yourself rather, my dear sir, from the steep

[1] Bernard Barton (1784-1849), the Quaker poet of Woodbridge, who was at this time thinking of forsaking the bank-clerkship which he held in favour of authorship. Charles Lamb dissuaded him. He remained a bank-clerk until within two days of his death.

Tarpeian rock, slap-dash headlong upon iron spikes. If you have but five consolatory minutes between the desk and the bed, make much of them, and live a century in them, rather than turn slave to the booksellers. They are Turks and Tartars when they have poor authors at their beck. Hitherto you have been at arm's length from them. Come not within their grasp. I have known many authors want for bread, some repining, others enjoying the blessed security of a spunging-house, all agreeing they had rather have been tailors, weavers-what-not? rather than the things they were. I have known some starved, some to go mad, one dear friend literally dying in a workhouse. You know not what a rapacious set these booksellers are. Ask even Southey, who (a single case almost) has made a fortune by book drudgery, what he has found them. O you know not, may you never know, the miseries of subsisting by authorship. 'Tis a pretty appendage to a situation like yours or mine; but a slavery, worse than all slavery, to be a bookseller's dependant, to drudge your brains for pots of ale, and breasts of mutton, to change your FREE THOUGHTS and VOLUNTARY NUMBERS for ungracious TASK-WORK. The booksellers hate us. The reason I take to be, that contrary to other trades, in which the master gets all the credit (a jeweller or silversmith for instance), and the journeyman, who really does the fine work, is in the back-ground; in our work the world gives all the credit to us, whom they consider as their journeymen, and therefore do they hate us, and cheat us, and oppress us, and would wring the blood of us out, to put another sixpence in their mechanic pouches.

. . . . . .

Keep to your bank, and the bank will keep you. Trust not to the public; you may hang, starve, drown yourself for anything that worthy personage cares. I bless every

star, that Providence, not seeing good to make me independent, has seen it next good to settle upon me the stable foundation of Leadenhall.[1] Sit down, good B.B., in the banking-office; what! is there not from six to eleven, P.M. six days in the week, and is there not all Sunday? Fie, what a superfluity of man's time, if you could think so! Enough for relaxation, mirth, converse, poetry, good thoughts, quiet thoughts. Oh, the corroding, torturing, tormenting thoughts that disturb the brain of the unlucky wight, who must draw upon it for daily sustenance! Henceforth I retract all my fond complaints of mercantile employment; look upon them as lovers' quarrels. I was but half in earnest. Welcome dead timber of the desk, that gives me life. A little grumbling is a wholesome medicine for the spleen, but in my inner heart do I approve and embrace this our close, but unharassing way of life. I am quite serious. If you can send me *Fox,* I will not keep it six weeks, and will return it, with warm thanks to yourself and friend, without blot or dog's-ear.

Yours truly
C. Lamb.

Sneering at the British Public

Lord Byron to John Murray

Venice, *April* 6, 1819.

I mean to write my best work in Italian, and it will take me nine years more thoroughly to master the Language; and then, if my fancy exist, and I exist too, I will try what I *can* do *really.* As to the estimation of the English which you talk of, let them calculate what it is worth before they insult me with their insolent condescension.

[1] The East India House, where Charles Lamb was employed.

I have not written for their pleasure. If they are pleased, it is that they choose to be so; I have never flattered their opinions, nor their pride; nor will I. Neither will I make "Ladies" books: *al dilettar le femine e la plebe.* I have written from the fulness of my mind, from passion, from impulse, from many motives, but not for their "sweet voices."

I know the precise worth of popular applause, for few scribblers have had more of it; and if I chose to swerve into their paths, I could retain it, or resume it. But I neither love ye nor fear ye; and though I buy with ye, and sell with ye, and talk with ye, I will neither eat with ye, drink with ye, nor pray with ye. They made me, without my search, a species of popular idol; they, without reason or judgment, beyond the caprice of their good pleasure, threw down the image from its pedestal; it was not broken with the fall, and they would, it seems, again replace it,—but they shall not.

Confident of His Future Fame

William Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont

Coleorton, *May* 21, 1807.

My dear Lady Beaumont,—

Though I am to see you so soon, I cannot but write a word or two, to thank you for the interest you take in my poems, as evinced by your solicitude about their immediate reception. I write partly to thank you for this, and to express the pleasure it has given me, and partly to remove any uneasiness from your mind which the disappointments you sometimes meet with, in this labour of love, may occasion. I see that you have many battles to fight for me—more than, in the ardour and confidence of your pure and ele-

vated mind, you have ever thought of being summoned to; but be assured that this opposition is nothing more than what I distinctly foresaw that you and my other friends would have to encounter. I say this, not to give myself credit for an eye of prophecy, but to allay any vexatious thoughts on my account which this opposition may have produced in you.

It is impossible that any expectations can be lower than mine concerning the immediate effect of this little work upon what is called the public. I do not here take into consideration that envy and malevolence, and all the bad passions which always stand in the way of a work of any merit from a living poet; but merely think of the pure, absolute, honest ignorance, in which all worldlings of every rank and situation must be enveloped, with respect to the thoughts, feelings and images on which the life of my poems depend. The things which I have taken, whether from within or without, what have they to do with routs, dinners, morning calls, hurry from door to door, from street to street, on foot or in carriage; with Mr. Pitt or Mr. Fox, Mr. Paul or Sir Francis Burdett, the Westminster election or the borough of Honiton? In a word —for I cannot stop to make my way through the hurry of images that present themselves to me—what have they to do with the endless talking about things nobody cares anything for except as far as their own vanity is concerned? —what have they to do (to say all at once) with a life without love? In such a life there can be no thought; for we have no thought (save thoughts of pain) but as far as we have love and admiration.

It is an awful truth, that there neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of the twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world—among those who either are, or

are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society. This is a truth, and an awful one, because to be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in my sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God.

Upon this I shall insist elsewhere; at present let me confine myself to my object; which is to make you, my dear friend, as easy-hearted as myself with respect to these poems. Trouble not yourself upon their present reception; of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny?—to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and, therefore, to become more actively and securely virtuous; this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform, long after we (that is, all that is mortal to us) are mouldered in our graves. I am well aware how far it would seem to many I overrate my own exertions, when I speak in this way, in direct connexion with the volume which I have just made public.

I am not, however, afraid of such censure, insignificant as probably the majority of those poems would appear to very respectable persons. I do not mean London wits and witlings, for these have too many foul passions about them to be respectable, even if they had more intellect than the benign laws of Providence will allow to such a heartless existence as theirs is; but grave, kindly-natured, worthy persons, who would be pleased if they could. I hope that these volumes are not without some recommendations, even for readers of this class: but their imagination has slept; and the voice which is the voice of the poetry, without imagination, cannot be heard. . . .

My letter (as this second sheet, which I am obliged to take, admonished me) is growing to an enormous length; and yet, saving that I have expressed my calm confidence

that these poems will live, I have said nothing which has a particular application to the object of it, which was to remove all disquiet from your mind on account of the condemnation they may at present incur from the portion of my contemporaries who are called the public. I am sure, my dear Lady Beaumont, if you attach any importance to it, it can only be from an apprehension that it may affect me, upon which I have already set you at ease; or from a fear that this present blame is ominous of their future or final destiny. If this be the case, your tenderness for me betrays you. Be assured that the decision of these persons has nothing to do with the question; they are altogether incompetent judges. These people in the senseless hurry of their idle lives, do not *read* books, they merely snatch a glance at them that they may talk about them. And even if it were not so, never forget what, I believe, was observed to you by Coleridge, that every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great or original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished; he must teach the art by which he is to be seen; this, in a certain degree, even to all persons, however wise and pure may be their lives, and however unvitiated their taste. But for those who dip into books in order to give an opinion of them, or talk about them to take up an opinion—for this multitude of unhappy and misguided, and misguiding beings, an entire regeneration must be produced; and if this be possible, it must be a work of time. To conclude, my ears are stone-dead to this idle buzz, and my flesh as insensible as iron to these petty stings; and, after what I have said, I am sure yours will be the same. I doubt not that you will share with me an invincible confidence that my writings (and among them these little poems) will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, wherever found; and that they will in their degree, be efficacious in

making men wiser, better, and happier. Farewell. I will not apologize for this letter, though its length demands an apology. Believe me, eagerly wishing for the happy day when I shall see you and Sir George here,

Most affectionately yours,
W. WORDSWORTH.

ENGLAND'S GREATEST LYRIC POET EXPLAINS HIS ART

John Keats to John Taylor

Hampstead
27 *February* [1818]

In poetry I have a few axioms, and you will see how far I am from their centre.

1st. I think poetry should surprise by a fine excess, and not by singularity; it should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance.

2nd. Its touches of beauty should never be half-way, thereby making the reader breathless, instead of content. The rise, the progress, the setting of Imagery should, like the sun, come natural to him, shine over him, and set soberly, although in magnificence, leaving him in the luxury of twilight. But it is easier to think what poetry should be, than to write it. And this leads me to

Another axiom—That if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all.—However it may be with me, I cannot help looking into new countries with "O for a muse of Fire to ascend!" If "Endymion" serves me as a pioneer, perhaps I ought to be content—I have great reason to be content, for thank God I can read, and perhaps understand Shakespeare to his depths; and I have I am sure many friends, who, if I fail,

will attribute any change in my life and temper to humbleness rather than pride—to a cowering under the wings of great poets, rather than to a bitterness that I am not appreciated. I am anxious to get "Endymion" printed that I may forget it and proceed.

The Pleasures of Literature and State-Craft Compared

Lord Macaulay to Thomas Flower Ellis

Calcutta, *December* 30, 1835.

I am in excellent health. So are my sister and brother-in-law, and their little girl, whom I am always nursing; and of whom I am becoming fonder than a wise man, with half my experience, would choose to be of anything except himself. I have but very lately begun to recover my spirits. The tremendous blow which fell on me at the beginning of this year has left marks behind it which I shall carry to my grave. Literature has saved my life and my reason. Even now, I dare not, in the intervals of business, remain alone for a minute without a book in my hand. What my course of life will be, when I return to England, is very doubtful. But I am more than half determined to abandon politics, and to give myself wholly to letters; to undertake some great historical work[1] which may be at once the business and the amusement of my life; and to leave the pleasures of pestiferous rooms, sleepless nights, aching heads, and diseased stomachs to Roebuck and to Praed.

In England I might probably be of a very different opinion. But, in the quiet of my own little grass-plot,—when

[1] *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second.*

the moon, at its rising, finds me with the Philoctetes or the De Finibus in my hand,—I often wonder what strange infatuation leads men who can do something better to squander their intellect, their health, their energy, on such subjects as those which most statesmen are engaged in pursuing. I comprehend perfectly how a man who can debate, but who would make a very indifferent figure as a contributor to an annual or a magazine,—such a man as Stanley, for example,—should take the only line by which he can attain distinction. But that a man before whom the two paths of literature and politics lie open, and who might hope for eminence in either, should choose politics, and quit literature, seems to me madness. On the one side is health, leisure, peace of mind, the search after truth, and all the enjoyments of friendship and conversation. On the other side is almost certain ruin to the constitution, constant labour, constant anxiety. Every friendship which a man may have, becomes precarious as soon as he engages in politics. As to abuse, men soon become callous to it, but the discipline which makes them callous is very severe. And for what is it that a man who might, if he chose, rise and lie down at his own hour, engage in any study, enjoy any amusement, and visit any place, consents to make himself as much a prisoner as if he were within the rules of the Fleet; to be tethered during eleven months of the year within the circle of half a mile round Charing Cross; to sit, or stand, night after night for ten or twelve hours, inhaling a noisome atmosphere, and listening to harangues of which nine-tenths are far below the level of a leading article in a newspaper? For what is it that he submits, day after day, to see the morning break over the Thames, and then totters home, with bursting temples, to his bed? Is it for fame? Who would compare the fame of Charles Townshend to that of Hume, that of Lord North to that

of Gibbon, that of Lord Chatham to that of Johnson? Who can look back on the life of Burke and not regret that the years which he passed in ruining his health and temper by political exertions were not passed in the composition of some great and durable work? Who can read the letters to Atticus, and not feel that Cicero would have been an infinitely happier and better man, and a not less celebrated man, if he had left us fewer speeches, and more Academic Questions and Tusculan Disputations; if he had passed the time which he spent in brawling with Vatinius and Clodius in producing a history of Rome superior even to that of Livy? But these, as I said, are meditations in a quiet garden, situated far beyond the contagious influence of English faction. What I might feel if I again saw Downing Street and Palace Yard is another question. I tell you sincerely my present feelings.

I have cast up my reading account, and brought it to the end of the year 1835. It includes December 1834; for I came into my house and unpacked my books at the end of November 1834. During the last thirteen months I have read Æschylus twice; Sophocles twice; Euripides once; Pindar twice; Callimachus; Apollonius Rhodius; Quintus Calaber; Theocritus twice; Herodotus; Thucydides; almost all Xenophon's works; almost all Plato; Aristotle's Politics, and a good deal of his Organon, besides dipping elsewhere in him; the whole of Plutarch's Lives; about half of Lucian; two or three books of Athenæus; Plautus twice; Terence twice; Lucretius twice; Catullus; Tibullus; Propertius; Lucan; Statius; Silius Italicus; Livy; Velleius Paterculus; Sallust; Cæsar; and, lastly, Cicero. I have, indeed, still a little of Cicero left; but I shall finish him in a few days. I am now deep in Aristophanes and Lucian. Of Aristophanes I think as I always thought; but Lucian has agreeably surprised me. At school I read

some of his Dialogues of the Dead when I was thirteen; and, to my shame, I never, to the best of my belief, read a line of him since. I am charmed with him. His style seems to me to be superior to that of any extant writer who lived later than the age of Demosthenes and Theophrastus. He has a most peculiar and delicious vein of humour. It is not the humour of Aristophanes; it is not that of Plato: and yet it is akin to both;—not quite equal, I admit, to either, but still exceedingly charming. I hardly know where to find an instance of a writer, in the decline of a literature, who has shown an invention so rich, and a taste so pure. But, if I get on these matters, I shall fill sheet after sheet. They must wait till we take another long walk, or another tavern dinner, together; that is, till the summer of 1838.

Agonising Over Cromwell's Letters

Thomas Carlyle to John Sterling

Chelsea, *December* 4, 1843.

I am very miserable at present; or call it heavy-laden with fruitless toil, which will have much the same meaning. My abode is, and has been, figuratively speaking, in the centre of chaos. Onwards there is no moving in any yet discovered line, and where I am is no abiding—miserable enough.

The fact is, without any figure, I am doomed to write some book about that unblessed Commonwealth, and as yet there will no book show itself possible. The whole stagnancy of the English genius two hundred years thick lies heavy on me. Dead heroes buried under two centuries of Atheism seem to whimper pitifully, "Deliver us! Canst thou not deliver us?" And alas! what am I, or what is

my father's house? Confound it! I have lost four years of good labour in the business; and still the more I depend on it, it is like throwing good labour after bad. On the whole, you ought to pity me. Is thy servant a dead dog that these things have fallen on him? My only consolation is that I am struggling to be the most conservative man in England, or one of the most conservative. If the past times, only two centuries back, lie wholly a torpedo darkness and dulness, freezing as with Medusa glance all souls of men that look on it, where are our foundations gone? If the past time cannot become *melodious,* it must be forgotten, as good as annihilated; and we rove like aimless exiles that *have* no ancestors, whose world began only yesterday. That must be my consolation, such as it is.

I see almost nobody. I avoid sight rather, and study to consume my own smoke. I wish among your buildings you would build me some small Prophet's chamber, fifteen feet square, with a separate garret and a flue for smoking, within a furlong of your big house, sacred from all noises of dogs, cocks, pianofortes, insipid men, engaging some dumb old woman to light a fire for me daily and boil some kind of kettle.

How Athens Taught Her Historians to Write

Edward FitzGerald to E. B. Cowell

Boulge, *Wednesday*
Jan. 25th, 1848.

I have just finished, all but the last three chapters of the fourth Book of Thucydides, and it is now no task to me to go on. This fourth book is the most interesting I have read; containing all that blockade of Pylos; that first great thumping of the Athenians at Oropus, after which

they for ever dreaded the Theban troops. And it came upon me "come stella in ciel," when, in the account of the taking of Amphipolis, Thucydides,[1] ὅς ταῦτα ξυνέγραψεν, comes with seven ships to the rescue! Fancy old Hallam sticking to his gun at a Martello tower! This was the way to write well; and this was the way to make literature respectable. Oh, Alfred Tennyson, could you but have the luck to be put to such employment! No man would do it better; a more heroic figure to head the defenders of his country could not be.

What it Means to be a Painter

James Smetham to ——

Surely few persons have any idea of what it is to be a painter; where first of all the mind within is taxed to conceive, to feel, to suffer, or excitedly to enjoy every new subject, and then has to search the earth over for ever-new materials to enable it to realise the idea, materials lying wide apart in the most different associations. The scholar has his library round about him. Southey can spend his fourteen hours a day with his books, far removed among the lakes, going his mountain walk at his appointed hour. The painter can do no such thing. He wants a gourd: he goes to Kew, and spends his day, but the gourd is not growing, and his picture will be at the exhibition before the gourd blossoms. He wants a costume, and has to find it, and haggle about it with a Jew, or hunt through Marlborough House Library for it. He wants a sailor's head, and goes to St. George's in the East, not easily to find it; to walk much and idle about much, and then only imperfectly to accomplish his object. The primroses for his

[1] IV., 104.

bank blow in the woods of Kent, and the anemones and hyacinths. The mill wheel turns slumberously round miles and miles away in another direction. The bit of wild wood scenery is accessible with trouble and expense, but the weather—*just when he has time*—is gray and cold, and the east wind prevails. It would be the risking of his life to paint as he desires, that ashy gray and green tree root, because he has already a cold, and the ground is damp; and yet his picture would be engemmed by it, and he hankers after it. The golden day arrives when he would go into the woods, but the primroses are dead, the hyacinths drooping, or the fancy picture must be put on one side for the more remunerative portrait.

Carry out this train of thought, and you will wonder how a complex picture gets painted at all.

He is Content to Watch the Galley of Fame Go By.—But Why is not Dante Gabriel Rossetti Aboard?

James Smetham to ———

4th May, 1874.

The conditioning of English art has come to be dramatic and striking. The silent brotherhood disperse over Europe and further; to Damascus, Cairo, Algiers. They go, each apart, to solitary places, and to places desolate of old; to little Italian towns, quaint German villages, Scotch glens, bare twilight vales in the Hebrides, and a long hush falls upon them. May comes round, and all is changed. It is as when we stood in the barge at the Boat-race, only instead of the fleeting dream of dark and light blue we have a nation lining the banks, restless and glittering, and waiting for the galley of Cleopatra as on the Cydnus of old. Artillery are in waiting at intervals, and all is ex-

pectation. At last comes the golden galley of art high out of the water, with regular pulses of silver oars moving to "flutes and soft recorders." She reclines in pomp under the silken sail swollen to fulness. There is a deck above her on which stand in glittering armour, with sash and plume, the great painters and sculptors of the year, and behind them, but raised on another deck, crowd princes, statesmen, warriors fresh from the field, "with station like the herald Mercury new-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill." Right beneath you, as it seems, and close over you, suddenly burst and boom the guns of fame, and shake the air and the earth and you.

You, what are *you* doing, at your age, in the empty barge moored at the brink? Why are you not on the galley? Are you not filled with envy? Will you not throw some mud as it passes? No, indeed; I've brought three laurel wreaths to throw aboard—one for Millais, one for Watts, one for somebody else, I won't say who—settle it among yourselves, only don't let Hart get hold of it. The only mischief I am inclined for is to put hollow hand to mouth like Rossetti's "Hector," and yell out "Where's old Brown? What have you done with Gabriel Rossetti? Yah!"

I've nothing to say against the galley, and cheer with the loudest, and shall delight myself with every touch of these men, and those also who are not there.

Still, you know the working of the old problems, and each time the galley sails up the Cydnus I am obliged to ask my heart the old set of questions, and my heart replies with no hesitation as of yore, "I would not have it otherwise. If all were to do over again, I would do just the same."

Only I say this with more rest and gladness than ever, with more entire contentment, with deeper thankfulness to God and to man.

Uttering His Heart About the Public—and Some Other Things Beside

Robert Louis Stevenson to Edmund Gosse

Skerryvore, Bournemouth, *Jan. 2nd,* 1886.

That is the hard part of literature. You aim high, and you take longer over your work, and it will not be so successful as if you had aimed low and rushed it. What the public likes is work (of any kind) a little loosely executed; so long as it is a little wordy, a little slack, a little dim and knotless, the dear public likes it; it should (if possible) be a little dull into the bargain. I know that good work sometimes hits; but, with my hand on my heart, I think it is by an accident. And I know also that good work must succeed at last; but that is not the doing of the public; they are only shamed into silence or affectation. I do not write for the public; I do write for money, a nobler deity; and most of all for myself, not perhaps any more noble, but both more intelligent and nearer home.

Let us tell each other sad stories of the bestiality of the beasts whom we feed. What he likes is the newspaper; and to me the press is the mouth of a sewer, where lying is professed as from an university chair, and everything prurient, and ignoble, and essentially dull, finds its abode and pulpit. I do not like mankind; but men, and not all of these—and fewer women. As for respecting the race, and, above all, that fatuous rabble of burgesses called "the public," God save me from such irreligion!—that way lies disgrace and dishonour. There must be something wrong in me, or I would not be popular.

This is perhaps a trifle stronger than my sedate and permanent opinion. Not much, I think. As for the art that we practise, I have never been able to see why its pro-

fessors should be respected. They chose the primrose path; when they found it was not all primroses, but some of it brambly, and much of it uphill, they began to think and to speak of themselves as holy martyrs. But a man is never martyred in any honest sense in the pursuit of his pleasure; and *delirium tremens* has more of the honour of the cross. We were full of the pride of life, and chose, like prostitutes, to live by a pleasure. We should be paid if we give the pleasure we pretend to give; but why should we be honoured?

I hope some day you and Mrs. Gosse will come for a Sunday; but we must wait till I am able to see people. I am very full of Jenkin's life; it is painful, yet very pleasant, to dig into the past of a dead friend, and find him, at every spadeful, shine brighter. I own, as I read, I wonder more and more why he should have taken me to be a friend. He had many and obvious faults upon the face of him; the heart was pure gold. I feel it little pain to have lost him, for it is a loss in which I cannot believe; I take it, against reason, for an absence; if not to-day, then to-morrow, I still fancy I shall see him in the door; and then, now when I know him better, how glad a meeting! Yes, if I could believe in the immortality business, the world would indeed be too good to be true; but we were put here to do what service we can, for honour and not for hire: the sods cover us, and the worm that never dies, the conscience, sleeps well at last; these are the wages, besides what we receive so lavishly day by day; and they are enough for a man who knows his own frailty and sees all things in the proportion of reality. The soul of piety was killed long ago by that idea of reward. Nor is happiness, whether eternal or temporal, the reward that mankind seeks. Happinesses are but his wayside campings; his soul is in the journey; he was born for the struggle, and only

tastes his life in effort and on the condition that he is opposed. How, then, is such a creature, so fiery, so pugnacious, so made up of discontent and aspiration, and such noble and uneasy passions—how can he be rewarded but by rest? I would not say it aloud; for man's cherished belief is that he loves that happiness which he continually spurns and passes by; and this belief in some ulterior happiness exactly fits him. He does not require to stop and taste it; he can be about the rugged and bitter business where his heart lies; and yet he can tell himself this fairy tale of an eternal tea-party, and enjoy the notion that he is both himself and something else; and that his friends will yet meet him, all ironed out and emasculate, and still be lovable,—as if love did not live in the faults of the beloved only, and draw its breath in an unbroken round of forgiveness! But the truth is, we must fight until we die; and when we die there can be no quiet for mankind but complete resumption into—what?—God, let us say—when all these desperate tricks will lie spell-bound at last.

Here came my dinner and cut this sermon short—*excusez.* R. L. S.

VI

Literary Verdicts

Boswell's Life of Johnson.

Horace Walpole (1717-1797)

He admires in Dryden his ardour and impetuosity of mind.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

Wordsworth as compared with Milton.

John Keats (1795-1821)

A verdict upon the literature of his own age.

Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859)

Congratulating Dickens on "The Christmas Carol."

Francis Jeffrey (1773-1850)

A lady's opinion of Lord Byron.

Miss Mitford (1789-1855)

Byron beyond Wordsworth and Keats beyond them all.

Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846)

He returns to his classics and finds in them solace for grief.

Lord Macaulay (1800-1859)

Wherein Plato is re-discovered and a German professor condemned.

Lord Macaulay (1800-1859)

"The grand heroic spirit—that trumpet-stop on his organ."

Charles Lever (1806-1872)

Those inimitable Dickens touches.

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863)

He revolts against Asceticism.

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863)

A woman and her hero.

Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855)

The Chinese fidelity and miniature delicacy of Jane Austen.

Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855)

Arranging the poets in the order of their morality.

Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883)

Sophocles is a pure Greek temple, but Æschylus troubles men with his grandeur and his gloom.

Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883)

He is not pleased with "The Idylls of the King."

Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883)

That Scott resembles Homer in the simplicity of his story; and that Miss Austen never goes out of the parlour.

Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883)

Literary prejudices, together with an anecdote about his "Daddy."

Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883)

"Pauvre et triste humanité."

Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883)

Discovering the Brontë literature.

James Smetham (1821-1889)

Boswell's Life of Johnson

Horace Walpole to Miss Berry

Berkeley Square, *May* 26, 1791.

The rest of my letter must be literary; for we have no news. Boswell's book is gossiping, but, having numbers of proper names, would be more readable, at least by me, were it reduced from two volumes to one: but there are woful *longuers,* both about his hero and himself, the *fidus Achates;* about whom one has not the smallest curiosity. But I wrong the original Achates; one is satisfied with his fidelity in keeping his master's secrets and weaknesses, which modern led-captains betray for their patron's glory and to hurt their own enemies; which Boswell has done shamefully, particularly against Mrs. Piozzi, and Mrs. Montagu, and Bishop Percy. Dr. Blagden says justly, that it is a new kind of libel, by which you may abuse anybody, by saying some dead person said so and so of somebody alive. Often, indeed, Johnson made the most brutal speeches to living persons; for though he was good-natured at bottom, he was very ill-natured at top. He loved to dispute, to show his superiority. If his opponents were weak, he told them they were fools; if they vanquished him, he was scurrilous—to nobody more than to Boswell himself, who was contemptible for flattering him so grossly, and for enduring the coarse things he was continually vomiting on Boswell's own country, Scotland. I expected, amongst the excommunicated, to find myself, but am very gently treated. I never would be in the least acquainted with Johnson; or, as Boswell calls it, I had not

a just value for him; which the biographer imputes to my resentment for the doctor's putting bad arguments (purposely, out of Jacobitism) into the speeches which he wrote fifty years ago for my father, in the *Gentleman's Magazine;* which I did not read then, or ever knew Johnson wrote till Johnson died, nor have looked at since. Johnson's blind Toryism and known brutality kept me aloof; nor did I ever exchange a syllable with him: nay, I do not think I ever was in the room with him six times in my days. Boswell came to me, said Dr. Johnson was writing the *Lives of the Poets,* and wished I would give him anecdotes of Mr. Gray. I said, very coldly, I had given what I knew to Mr. Mason. Boswell hummed and hawed and then dropped, "I suppose you know Dr. Johnson does not admire Mr. Gray." Putting as much contempt as I could into my look and tone, I said, "Dr. Johnson don't!—humph!"—and with that monosyllable ended our interview. After the doctor's death, Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Boswell sent an ambling circular-letter to me, begging subscriptions for a monument for him—the two last, I think, impertinently; as they could not but know my opinion, and could not suppose I would contribute to a monument for one who had endeavoured, poor soul! to degrade my friend's superlative poetry. I would not deign to write an answer; but sent down word by my footman, as I would have done to parish officers with a brief, that I would not subscribe. In the two new volumes Johnson says, and very probably did, or is made to say, that Gray's poetry is *dull,* and that he was a *dull* man! The same oracle dislikes Prior, Swift, and Fielding. If an elephant could write a book, perhaps one that had read a great deal would say, that an Arabian horse is a very clumsy, ungraceful animal. Pass to a better chapter.

He Admires in Dryden His Ardour and Impetuosity of Mind

William Wordsworth to Sir Walter Scott

Patterdale, *November* 7, 1805.

My dear Scott,—

I was much pleased to hear of your engagement with Dryden; not that he is, as a poet, any great favourite of mine. I admire his talents and genius highly; but his is not a poetical genius. The only qualities I can find in Dryden that are *essentially* poetical, are a certain ardour and impetuosity of mind, with an excellent ear. It may seem strange that I do not add to this, great command of language: *that* he certainly has, and of such language, too, as it is most desirable that a poet should possess, or rather that he should not be without. But it is not language that is, in the highest sense of the word, poetical, being neither of the imagination nor of the passions; I mean the amiable, the ennobling, or the intense passions. I do not mean to say that there is nothing of this in Dryden, but as little, I think, as is possible, considering how much he has written. You will easily understand my meaning, when I refer to his versification of Palamon and Arcite, as contrasted with the language of Chaucer. Dryden had neither a tender heart nor a lofty sense of moral dignity. Whenever his language is poetically impassioned, it is mostly upon unpleasing subjects, such as the follies, vices, and crimes of classes of men or of individuals. That his cannot be the language of imagination, must have necessarily followed from this—that there is not a single image from nature in the whole body of his work; and in his translation from Virgil, whenever Virgil can be fairly said to have had his *eye* upon his object, Dryden always spoils the passage.

Wordsworth as Compared with Milton

John Keats to John Hamilton Reynolds

Teignmouth, 3 *May* [1818].

I will return to Wordsworth—whether or no he has an extended vision or a circumscribed grandeur—whether he is an eagle in his nest or on the wing. And to be more explicit and to show you how tall I stand by the giant, I will put down a simile of human life as far as I now perceive it; that is, to the point to which I say we both have arrived at. Well—I compare human life to a large Mansion of many apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me. The first we step into we call the Infant, or Thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think. We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle within us—we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight. However among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man—of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness, and Oppression—whereby this Chamber of Maiden-Thought becomes gradually darkened, and at the same time, on all sides of it, many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages. We see not the balance of good and evil; we are in a mist, *we* are now in that state, we

feel the "Burden of the Mystery." To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive, when he wrote "Tintern Abbey," and it seems to me that his genius is explorative of those dark Passages. Now if we live, and go on thinking, we too shall explore them. He is a genius and superior to us, in so far as he can, more than we, make discoveries and shed a light in them. Here I must think Wordsworth is deeper than Milton, though I think it has depended more upon the general and gregarious advance of intellect, than individual greatness of Mind. From the Paradise Lost and the other Works of Milton, I hope it is not too presuming, even between ourselves, to say, that his Philosophy, human and divine, may be tolerably understood by one not much advanced in years. In his time Englishmen were just emancipated from a great superstition, and Men had got hold of certain points and resting-places in reasoning which were too newly born to be doubted, and too much opposed by the Mass of Europe not to be thought ethereal and authentically divine —Who could gainsay his ideas on virtue, vice, and Chastity in Comus just at the time of the dismissal of Cod-pieces and a hundred other disgraces? who would not rest satisfied with his hintings at good and evil in the Paradise Lost, when just free from the Inquisition and burning in Smithfield? The Reformation produced such immediate and great benefits, that Protestantism was considered under the immediate eye of heaven, and its own remaining dogmas and superstitions then, as it were, regenerated, constituted those resting-places and other sure points of Reasoning— from that I have mentioned, Milton, whatever he may have thought in the sequel, appears to have been content with these by his writings. He did not think into the human heart as Wordsworth has done. Yet Milton as a Philosopher had sure as great powers as Wordsworth.

What is then to be inferred? O many things. It proves there is really a grand march of intellect, it proves that a mighty Providence subdues the mightiest minds to the service of the time being, whether it be in human Knowledge or Religion. I have often pitied a tutor who has to hear "Nom. Musa" so often dinn'd into his ears—I hope you may not have the same pain in this scribbling—I may have read these things before, but I never had even a thus dim perception of them; and moreover I like to say my lesson to one who will endure my tediousness, for my own sake. After all there is certainly something real in the world—Moore's present to Hazlitt is real—I like that Moore, and am glad I saw him at the Theatre just before I left town. Tom has spit a *leetle* blood this afternoon, and that is rather a damper—but I know—the truth is, there is something real in the World. Your third Chamber of Life shall be a lucky and a gentle one—stored with the wine of Love—and the bread of Friendship. When you see George, if he should not have received a letter from me tell him he will find one at home most likely—tell Bailey I hope soon to see him. Remember me to all. The leaves have been out here for many a day. I have written to George for the first stanzas of my "Isabel,"—I shall have them soon, and will copy the whole out for you.

Your affectionate friend

JOHN KEATS.

A VERDICT UPON THE LITERATURE OF HIS OWN AGE

Thomas De Quincey to a Young Man Who Had Consulted Him Upon the Advisability of Adopting Literature as a Career

Want of experience, therefore, or insufficient experience, may render my judgment in such a case partially wrong.

But at least I can promise you an honest judgment; and next week, when I shall be less oppressed by calls upon my time, this shall be at your service. By an honest judgment I do not mean to insinuate that authors in general are capable of feeling any bias from jealousy lest they should be the means of introducing a fresh competitor into the paths of literature. Far from it. The literary body, as a whole, is honourable, and generous. And very few, indeed, I am sure, would give a false report under *this* bias. But most men addict themselves to speaking cynically of contemporary literature, as every age and generation in succession speaks cynically of itself. They persuade themselves that all things are amiss; that the spirit of originality is extinct; and, as every age in turn sees most of the imitative spirit which gathers round the heel of power, these men fancy *that* peculiar to their own times which has merely been brushed away from the face of past times by its own intrinsic perishableness. Now, at least I can hold myself to be free from these too common prepossessions. I see more to admire, more power and vital force of every kind, in my own generation than in any other. And I refuse to be duped by the scenical effects of distance or abstraction. It does not follow that our literature is in a good state. I think it far otherwise; but its faults are not from want of power.

With respect to the other question, not only is it much more difficult because a *personal* question, allowing for the utmost candour in both parties to such an inquiry, but it is really a dangerous one for any peremptory judgment, and for a reason which, perhaps, you will stare at. The notion is universal that talent, *a fortiori* genius, never grows. All which a man has he had from the beginning. Growth takes place in knowledge, in skill, in address, and many artificial qualities; but not, it is supposed, in down-

right power. Now, I beg you to suppose that it is no love of paradox which forces me into any opposite opinion. I will not contend as to the absolute metaphysical realities of the case. Whether genius, like coal and diamonds in some theories, is always in a secret state of growth, or whether it is only that a veil clears away from the mind, leaving what was always there more conspicuously visible, either way the result is the same; experience of life, larger comprehension of truth, above all, solitude, grief, meditation, *do* effectually bring out powers in the adult not conjecturally visible in the boy or very young man.

Congratulating Dickens on "The Christmas Carol"

Francis Jeffrey to Charles Dickens

Edinburgh, *December* 26, 1843.

Blessings on your kind heart, my dear Dickens! and may it always be as light and full as it is kind, and a fountain of kindness to all within reach of its beatings! We are all charmed with your Carol, chiefly, I think, for the genuine goodness which breathes all through it, and in the true inspiring angel by which its genius has been awakened. The whole scene of the Cratchetts is like the dream of a beneficent angel in spite of its broad reality, and little tiny Tim, in life and death almost as sweet and as touching as Nelly. And then the school-day scene, with that large-hearted delicate sister, and her true inheritor, with his gall-lacking liver, and milk of human kindness for blood, and yet all so natural, and so humbly and serenely happy! Well, you should be happy yourself, for you may be sure you have done more good, and not only fastened more kindly feelings, but prompted more positive acts of

beneficence, by this little publication, than can be traced to all the pulpits and confessionals in Christendom since Christmas, 1842.

And is not this better than caricaturing American knaveries, or lavishing your great gifts of fancy and observation on Pecksniffs, Dodgers, Bailleys, and Moulds. Nor is this a mere crotchet of mine, for nine-tenths of your readers, I am convinced, are of the same opinion; and accordingly, I prophesy that you will sell three times as many of this moral and pathetic Carol as of your grotesque and fantastical Chuzzlewits.

I hope you have not fancied that I think less frequently of you, or love you less, because I have not lately written to you. Indeed it is not so; but I have been poorly in health for the last five months, and advancing age makes me lazy and perhaps forgetful. But I do not forget my benefactors, and I owe too much to you not to have you constantly in my thoughts. I scarcely know a single individual to whom I am indebted for so much pleasure, and the means at least of being made better. I wish you had not made such an onslaught on the Americans. Even if it were all merited, it does mischief, and no good. Besides, you know that there are many exceptions; and if ten righteous might have saved a city once, there are surely innocent and amiable men and women, and besides, boys and girls enough, in that vast region, to arrest the proscription of a nation. I cannot but hope, therefore, that you will relent before you have done with them, and contrast your deep shadings with some redeeming touches. God bless you. I must not say more to-day. With most kind love to Mrs. Dickens, always very affectionately, etc.

Since writing this in the morning, and just as I was going to seal it, in comes another copy of the Carol, with

a flattering autograph on the blank page, and an address in your own "fine Roman hand." I thank you with all my heart, for this proof of your remembrance, and am pleased to think, that while I was so occupied about you, you had not been forgetful of me. Heaven bless you and all that are dear to you. Ever yours, etc.

A Lady's Opinion of Lord Byron

Miss Mitford to Benjamin Robert Haydon

2nd November, 1824.

I have just finished Lord Byron's "Conversations" (you are going to be very angry now), and I find my words of enthusiasm for the noble poet very fully justified and borne out. To say nothing of the open and avowed profligacy abroad and at home, only think of the taste which the book shows—the crying down Keats, Milton, Shakespeare, Wordsworth—the crying up Moore's frippery songs, Dr. Johnson's heavy criticisms, and his own dull plays. What he says of Shakespeare, and of Wordsworth in particular, is disgusting. To fasten on the few and rare grossnesses of Shakespeare, which pure-minded readers pass over almost without consciousness, and forget all that there is of divine in the poet of the world; and to pitch on a few faults of system in Wordsworth, and to speak of him as if he was no poet at all. Fifty years hence our descendants will see which is remembered best, the author of the "Excursion," or of "Childe Harold." But he seems to me to have wanted the power of admiration, the organ of veneration; to have been a cold, sneering, vain, Voltairish person, charitable as far as money went, and liberal as far as it did not interfere with his aristocratic notions; but very derisive, very un-English, very

scornful. Captain Medwyn speaks of his suppressed laugh. How unpleasant an idea that gives! The only thing that does him much credit in the whole book is his hearty admiration of Scott. But Scott did not interfere with him. If Sir Walter had been a poet as Wordsworth, we should have seen.

Byron Beyond Wordsworth and Keats Beyond Them All

Benjamin Robert Haydon to Miss Mitford

1824.

You are unjust, depend upon it, in your estimate of Byron's poetry, and wrong in your ranking Wordsworth beyond him. There are things in Byron's poetry so exquisite, that, fifty or five hundred years hence, they will be read, felt, and adored throughout the world. I grant that Wordsworth is very pure and very holy, and very orthodox, and occasionally very elevated, highly poetical, and often insufferably obscure, starched, dowdy, anti-human and anti-sympathetic, but he never will be ranked above Byron nor classed with Milton; he will not, indeed. He wants the constructive power, the *lucidus ordo* of the greatest minds, which is as much a proof of the highest order as any other quality. I dislike his selfish Quakerism; his affectation of superior virtue; his utter insensibility to the frailties—the beautiful frailties of passion. I was once walking with him on Pall Mall; we darted into Christie's. A copy of the "Transfiguration" was at the head of the room, and in the corner a beautiful copy of the "Cupid and Psyche" (statues) kissing. Cupid is taking her lovely chin, and turning her pouting mouth to meet his, while he archly bends his own down, as if saying, "Pretty dear!" You remember this exquisite group?

. . . . . Catching sight of the Cupid, as he and I were coming out, Wordsworth's face reddened, he showed his teeth, and then said in a loud voice, "THE DEV-V-V-VILS!" There's a mind! Ought not this exquisite group to have roused his "Shapes of Beauty," and have softened his heart as much as his old gray-mossed rocks, his withered thorn, and his dribbling mountain streams? I am altered about Wordsworth, very much, from finding him a bard too elevated to attend to the music of humanity. No, no! give me Byron, with all his spite, hatred, depravity, dandyism, vanity, frankness, passion, and idleness, to Wordsworth, with all his heartless communion with woods and grass.

When he came back from his tour, I breakfasted with him in Oxford street. He read "Laodamia" to me, and very finely. He had altered, at the suggestion of his wife, Laodamia's fate (but I cannot refer to it at this moment), because she had shown such weakness as to wish her husband's stay. Mrs. Wordsworth held that Laodamia ought to be punished, and punished she was. I will refer to it. Here it is—

> "She, whom a trance of passion thus removed
> As she departed, not without the crime
> Of lovers, who, in reason's spite have loved,
> Was doomed to wander in a joyless clime,
> Apart from happy ghosts, that gather flowers
> Of blissful quiet in Elysian bowers."

I have it in his own hand. This is different from the first edition. And as he repeated it with self-approbation of his own heroic feelings for punishing a wife because she felt a pang at her husband going to hell again, his own wife sat crouched by the fireplace, and chanted every line to the echo, apparently congratulating herself at being above the mortal frailty of loving her William.

You should make allowance for Byron's not liking

Keats. He could not. Keats' poetry was an immortal stretch beyond the mortal intensity of his own. An intense egotism, as it were, was the leading exciter of Byron's genius. He could feel nothing for fauns, or satyrs, or gods, or characters past, unless the associations of them were excited by some positive natural scene where they had actually died, written or fought. All his poetry was the result of a deep feeling roused by what passed before his eyes. Keats was a stretch beyond this.

He Returns to His Classics and Finds in Them Solace for Grief

Lord Macaulay to Thomas Flower Ellis

Calcutta, *February* 8, 1835.

Dear Ellis,—The last month has been the most painful that I ever went through. Indeed, I never knew before what it was to be miserable. Early in January, letters from England brought me news of the death of my youngest sister. What she was to me no words can express. I will not say that she was dearer to me than anything in the world; for my sister who was with me was equally dear; but she was as dear to me as one human being can be to another. Even now, when Time has begun to do its healing office, I cannot write about her without being altogether unmanned. That I have not utterly sunk under this blow I owe chiefly to literature. What a blessing it is to love books as I love them; and to be able to converse with the dead—to live amidst the unreal! Many times during the last few weeks I have repeated to myself those fine lines of old Hesiod:

> *εἰ γάρ τις καὶ πένθος ἔχων νεοκηδέϊ θυμῷ*
> *ἀζηται κραδίην ἀκαχήμενος, αὐτὰρ ἀοιδὸς*
> *μουσάων θεράπων κλεῖα προτέρων ἀνθρώπων*
> *ὑμνήσῃ, μάκαράς τε θεοὺς οἳ Ὄλυμπον ἔχουσι,*

αἶψ' ὄγε δυσφρονέων ἐπιλήθεται, οὐδέ τι κηδέων
μέμνηται· ταχέως δὲ παρέτραπε δῶρα θεάων.[1]

I have gone back to Greek literature with a passion quite astonishing to myself.[2] I have never felt anything like it. I was enraptured with Italian during the six months which I gave up to it; and I was little less pleased with Spanish. But, when I went back to the Greek, I felt as if I had never known before what intellectual enjoyment was. Oh that wonderful people! There is not one art, nor one science, about which we may not use the same expression which Lucretius has employed about the victory over superstition, "Primum Graius homo—."

I think myself very fortunate in having been able to return to these great masters while still in the full vigor of life, and when my taste and judgment are mature. Most people read all the Greek that they ever read before they

[1] "For if to one whose grief is fresh, as he sits silent with sorrow-stricken heart, a minstrel, the henchman of the Muses, celebrates the men of old and the gods who possess Olympus; straightway he forgets his melancholy, and remembers not at all his grief, beguiled by the blessed gift of the goddesses of song." In Macaulay's *Hesiod* this passage is scored with three lines in pencil.

[2] In a previous letter, dated December 15, 1834, directed from Calcutta to the same correspondent he had said: "I read much, and particularly Greek; and I find that I am, in all essentials, still not a bad scholar. I could, I think, with a year's hard study, qualify myself to fight a good battle for a Craven's scholarship. I read, however, not as I read at College, but like a man of the world. If I do not know a word, I pass it by, unless it is important to the sense. If I find, as I have of late often found, a passage which refuses to give up its meaning at the second reading, I let it alone. I have read during the last fortnight, before breakfast, three books of Herodotus, and four plays of Æschylus. My admiration of Æschylus has been prodigiously increased by this re-perusal. I cannot conceive how any person of the smallest pretension to taste should doubt about his immeasurable superiority to every poet of antiquity, Homer only excepted. Even Milton, I think, must yield to him."

are five and twenty. They never find time for such studies afterwards till they are in the decline of life; and then their knowledge of the language is in a great measure lost, and cannot easily be recovered. Accordingly, almost all the ideas that people have of Greek literature, are ideas formed while they were still very young. A young man, whatever his genius may be, is no judge of such a writer as Thucydides. I had no high opinion of him ten years ago. I have now been reading him with a mind accustomed to historical researches, and to political affairs; and I am astonished at my own former blindness, and at his greatness. I could not bear Euripides at college. I now read my recantation. He has faults undoubtedly. But what a poet! The Medea, the Alcestis, the Troades, the Bacchæ, are alone sufficient to place him in the very first rank. Instead of depreciating him, as I have done, I may, for aught I know, end by editing him.

I have read Pindar—with less pleasure than I feel in reading the great Attic poets, but still with admiration. An idea occurred to me which may very likely have been noticed by a hundred people before. I was always puzzled to understand the reason for the extremely abrupt transitions in those Odes of Horace which are meant to be particularly fine. The "justum et tenacem" is an instance. All at once you find yourself in heaven, Heaven knows how. What the firmness of just men in times of tyranny, or of tumult, has to do with Juno's oration about Troy it is hardly possible to conceive. Then, again, how strangely the fight between the Gods and the Giants is tacked on to the fine hymn to the Muses in that noble ode, "Descende cœlo et dic age tibiâ"! This always struck me as a great fault, and an inexplicable one; for it is peculiarly alien from the calm good sense, and good taste, which distinguish Horace.

My explanation of it is this. The Odes of Pindar were the acknowledged models of lyric poetry. Lyric poets imitated his manner as closely as they could; and nothing was more remarkable in his compositions than the extreme violence and abruptness of the transitions. This in Pindar was quite natural and defensible. He had to write an immense number of poems on subjects extremely barren, and extremely monotonous. There could be little difference between one boxing-match and another. Accordingly, he made all possible haste to escape from the immediate subject, and to bring in, by hook or by crook, some local description; some old legend; something or other, in short, which might be more susceptible of poetical embellishment, and less utterly threadbare, than the circumstances of a race or a wrestling-match. This was not the practice of Pindar alone. There is an old story which proves that Simonides did the same, and that sometimes the hero of the day was nettled at finding how little was said about him in the Ode for which he was to pay. This abruptness of transition was, therefore, in the Greek lyric poets, a fault rendered inevitable by the peculiarly barren and uniform nature of the subjects which they had to treat. But, like many other faults of great masters, it appeared to their imitators a beauty; and a beauty almost essential to the grander Ode. Horace was perfectly at liberty to choose his own subjects, and to treat them after his own fashion. But he confounded what was merely accidental in Pindar's manner with what was essential; and because Pindar, when he had to celebrate a foolish lad from Ægina who had tripped up another's heels at the Isthmus, made all possible haste to get away from so paltry a topic to the ancient heroes of the race of Æacus, Horace took it into his head that he ought always to begin as far from the subject as possible, and then arrive at it by some strange and sudden

bound. This is my solution. At least I can find no better. The most obscure passage,—at least the strangest passage,—in all Horace may be explained by supposing that he was misled by Pindar's example: I mean that odd parenthesis in the "Qualem Ministrum":

quibus
Mos unde deductus per omne—.

This passage, taken by itself, always struck me as the harshest, queerest, and most preposterous digression in the world. But there are several things in Pindar very like it.

You must excuse all this, for I labour at present under a suppression of Greek, and am likely to do so for at least three years to come. Malkin may be some relief; but I am quite unable to guess whether he means to come to Calcutta. I am in excellent bodily health, and I am recovering my mental health; but I have been sorely tried. Money matters look well. My new brother-in-law and I are brothers in more than law. I am more comfortable than I expected to be in this country; and, as to the climate, I think it, beyond all comparison, better than that of the House of Commons.

Yours affectionately
T. B. Macaulay.

Wherein Plato is Re-discovered and a German Professor Condemned

Lord Macaulay to Thomas Flower Ellis

Calcutta, *May* 29, 1835.

My time is divided between public business and books. I mix with society as little as I can. My spirits have not yet recovered,—I sometimes think that they will never wholly recover,—the shock which they received five months ago. I find that nothing soothes them so much as the contem-

plation of those miracles of art which Athens has bequeathed to us. I am really becoming, I hope not a pedant, but certainly an enthusiast about classical literature. I have just finished a second reading of Sophocles. I am now deep in Plato, and intend to go right through all his works. His genius is above praise. Even where he is most absurd,—as, for example, in the Cratylus,—he shows an acuteness, and an expanse of intellect, which is quite a phenomenon by itself. The character of Socrates does not rise upon me. The more I read about him, the less I wonder that they poisoned him. If he had treated me as he is said to have treated Protagoras, Hippias, and Gorgias, I could never have forgiven him.

Nothing has struck me so much in Plato's dialogues as the raillery. At college, somehow or other, I did not understand or appreciate it. I cannot describe to you the way in which it now tickles me. I often sink forward on my huge old Marsilius Ficinus in a fit of laughter. I should say that there never was a vein of ridicule so rich, at the same time so delicate. It is superior to Voltaire's; nay, to Pascal's. Perhaps there are one or two passages in Cervantes, and one or two in Fielding, that might give a modern reader a notion of it.

I have very nearly finished Livy. I never read him through before. I admire him greatly, and would give a quarter's salary to recover the lost Decades. While I was reading the earlier books I went again through Niebuhr. And I am sorry to say that, having always been a little sceptical about his merits, I am now a confirmed unbeliever. I do not of course mean that he has no merit. He was a man of immense learning, and of great ingenuity. But his mind was utterly wanting in the faculty by which a demonstrated truth is distinguished from a plausible supposition. He is not content with suggesting that an

event may have happened. He is certain that it happened, and calls on the reader to be certain too (though not a trace of it exists in any record whatever), because it would solve the phenomena so neatly. Just read over again, if you have forgotten it, the conjectural restoration of the Inscription in page 126 of the second volume; and then, on your honour as a scholar and a man of sense, tell me whether in Bentley's edition of Milton there is anything which approaches to the audacity of the emendation. Niebuhr requires you to believe that some of the greatest men in Rome were burned alive in the Circus; that this event was commemorated by an inscription on a monument, one-half of which is still in existence; but that no Roman historian knew anything about it; and that all tradition of the event was lost, though the memory of anterior events much less important has reached our time. When you ask for a reason, he tells you plainly that such a thing cannot be established by reason; that he is sure of it; and that you must take his word. This sort of intellectual despotism always moves me to mutiny, and generates a disposition to pull down the reputation of the dogmatist. Niebuhr's learning was immeasurably superior to mine; but I think myself quite as good a judge of evidence as he was. I might easily believe him if he told me that there were proofs which I had never seen; but, when he produces all his proofs, I conceive that I am perfectly competent to pronounce on their value.

As I turned over his leaves just now, I lighted on another instance of what I cannot but call ridiculous presumption. He says that Martial committed a blunder in making the penultimate of Porsena short. Strange that so great a scholar should not know that Horace had done so too!

Minacis aut Etrusca Porsenæ manus.

There is something extremely nauseous to me in a German Professor telling the world, on his own authority, and without giving the smallest reason, that two of the best Latin poets were ignorant of the quantity of a word which they must have used in their exercises at school a hundred times.

As to the general capacity of Niebuhr for political speculations, let him be judged by the Preface to the Second Volume. He there says, referring to the French Revolution of July 1830, that "unless God send us some miraculous help, we have to look forward to a period of destruction similar to that which the Roman world experienced about the middle of the third century." Now, when I see a man scribble such abject nonsense about events which are passing under our eyes, what confidence can I put in his judgment as to the connection of causes and effects in times very imperfectly known to us?

But I must bring my letter, or review, to a close. Remember me most kindly to your wife. Tell Frank that I mean to be a better scholar than he when I come back, and that he must work hard if he means to overtake me.

Ever, dear Ellis,

Your affectionate friend

T. B. Macaulay.

"The Grand Heroic Spirit—that Trumpet-Stop on His Organ"

Charles Lever to John Blackwood

Trieste, *August* 17, 1871.

The fine part of Scott's nature to my thinking was the grand heroic spirit—that trumpet-stop on his organ—which elevated our commonplace people and stirred the heart of all that was high-spirited and generous amongst us. It was the anti-climax to our realism and sensationalism—detective Police Literature or Watch-house Romance.

. . . The very influence that a gentleman exerts in society on a knot of inferiors was the sort of influence Scott brought to bear upon the whole nation. All felt that there was at least one there before whom nothing mean or low or shabby should be exhibited.

Those Inimitable Dickens Touches

William Makepeace Thackeray to Mrs. Brookfield

1849.

Have you read Dickens? O! it is charming! brave Dickens! It has some of his very prettiest touches—those inimitable Dickens touches which make such a great man of him; and the reading of the book has done another author a great deal of good. In the first place it pleases the other author to see that Dickens, who has long left off alluding to the A's works, has been copying the O. A. and greatly simplifying his style, and overcoming the use of fine words. By this the public will be the gainer and *David Copperfield* will be improved by taking a lesson from *Vanity Fair.* Secondly it has put me upon my metal; for ah! Madame, all the metal was out of me and I have been dreadfully and curiously cast down this month past. I say, secondly, it has put me on my metal and made me feel I must do something; that I have fame and name and family to support. . . .

He Revolts Against Asceticism

William Makepeace Thackeray to Mr. and Mrs. Brookfield

Christmas, 1849.

I stop in the middle of Costigan with a remark applied to readers of Thomas à Kempis and others, which is, I think, that cushion-thumpers and High and Low Church extatics, have often carried what they call their love for Δ to what seems impertinence to me. How good my ——

has been to me in sending me a backache,—how good in taking it away, how blessed the spiritual gift which enabled me to receive the sermon this morning,—how trying my dryness at this afternoon's discourse, etc. I say it is awful and blasphemous to be calling upon Heaven to interfere about the thousand trivialities of a man's life, that —— has ordered me something indigestible for dinner (which may account for my dryness in the afternoon's discourse); to say that it is Providence that sends a draught of air upon me which gives me a cold in the head, or superintends personally the action of the James' powder that makes me well. Bow down, Confess, Adore, Admire, and Reverence infinitely. Make your act of faith and trust. Acknowledge with constant awe the idea of the infinite Presence over all.—But what impudence it is in us, to talk about loving God enough, if I may so speak. Wretched little blindlings, what do we know about Him? Who says that we are to sacrifice the human affections as disrespectful to God? The liars, the wretched canting fakirs of Christianism, the convent and conventicle dervishes,—they are only less unreasonable now than the Eremites and holy women who whipped and starved themselves, never washed, and encouraged vermin for the glory of God. Washing is allowed now, and bodily filth and pain not always enjoined; but still they say, shut your ears and don't hear music, close your eyes and don't see nature and beauty, steel your hearts and be ashamed of your love for your neighbour; and timid fond souls scared by their curses, and bending before their unending arrogance and dulness, consent to be miserable, and bare their soft shoulders for the brutes' stripes, according to the nature of women. You dear Suttees, you get ready and glorify in being martyrized. Nature, truth, love, protest day after day in your tender hearts against the stupid remorseless tyranny which bullies you. Why you

dear creature, what a history that is in the Thomas à Kempis book! The scheme of that book carried out would make the world the most wretched, useless, dreary, doting place of sojourn—there would be no manhood, no love, no tender ties of mother and child, no use of intellect, no trade or science, a set of selfish beings crawling about avoiding one another and howling a perpetual *miserere*. We know that deductions like this have been drawn from the teaching of J. C., but please God the world is preparing to throw them over, and I won't believe them though they are written in ever so many books, any more than that the sky is green or the grass red. Those brutes made the grass red many a time, fancying they were acting rightly, amongst others with the blood of the person who was born today. Goodbye my dear lady and my dear old William.

A Woman and Her Hero [1]

Charlotte Brontë to W. S. Williams [2]

I

Dec. 11th, 1847.

I was glad and proud to get the bank bill Mr. Smith

[1] Thackeray (1811-1863) in 1848 sent Miss Brontë a copy of *Vanity Fair*. In 1852 he sent her a copy of *Esmond*, together with his grateful regards. The second edition of *Jane Eyre* was dedicated by Charlotte Brontë to him as to "an intellect profounder and more unique than his contemporaries have yet recognised." When his portrait was presented to her by Mr. George Smith, she stood before it, shaking her fist at it half-playfully, and saying, "Thou Titan!" After her death Thackeray recorded the impression wrought upon him by his first meeting with her in these words: "I fancied an austere little Joan of Arc marching in upon us and rebuking our easy lives, our easy morals." Again he says: "She gave me the impression of being a very pure, and lofty, and high-minded person. A great and holy reverence of right and truth seemed to be with her always."

[2] Mr. Williams (1800-1875) was the recipient of far and away

sent me yesterday, but I hardly ever felt delight equal to that which cheered me when I received your letter containing an extract from a note by Mr. Thackeray, in which he expressed himself gratified with the perusal of *Jane Eyre*. Mr. Thackeray is a keen ruthless satirist. I had never perused his writings but with blended feelings of admiration and indignation. Critics, it appears to me, do not know what an intellectual boa-constrictor he is. They call him "humorous," "brilliant"—his is a most scalping humour, a most deadly brilliancy: he does not play with his prey, he coils round it and crushes it in his rings. He seems terribly in earnest in his war against the falsehood and follies of "the world." I often wonder what that "world" thinks of him. I should think the faults of such a man would be distrust of anything good in human nature —galling suspicion of bad motives lurking behind good actions. Are these his failings?

They are, at any rate, the failings of his written sentiments, for he cannot find in his heart to represent either man or woman as at once good and wise. Does he not too much confound benevolence with weakness and wisdom with mere craft?

II

March 29th, 1848.

You mention Thackeray and the last number of *Vanity Fair*. The more I read Thackeray's works the more certain I am that he stands alone—alone in his sagacity, alone

the best letters that Charlotte Brontë ever wrote. He was "reader" to the publishing house of Smith & Elder; a post which has since been held by George Meredith, John Morley, and James Payn. It will be remembered that this was the firm which published the Brontë novels. He was a man of distinguished friendships. He had met with Coleridge. When Keats left England for Italy, it was Williams who saw him off. He associated with Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Thackeray, Mrs. Gaskell, Ruskin, and many other well-known writers.

in his truth, alone in his feeling (his feeling, though he makes no noise about it, is about the most genuine that ever lived on a printed page), alone in his power, alone in his simplicity, alone in his self-control. Thackeray is a Titan, so strong that he can afford to perform with calm the most herculean feats; there is the charm and majesty of repose in his greatest efforts; *he* borrows nothing from fever, his is never the energy of delirium—his energy is sane energy, deliberate energy, thoughtful energy. The last number of *Vanity Fair* proves this peculiarly. Forcible, exciting in its force, still more impressive than exciting, carrying on the interest of the narrative in a flow, deep, full, resistless, it is still quiet—as quiet as reflection, as quiet as memory; and to me there are parts of it that sound as solemn as an oracle. Thackeray is never borne away by his own ardour—he has it under control. His genius obeys him—it is his servant, it works no fantastic changes at its own wild will, it must still achieve the task which reason and sense assign it, and none other. Thackeray is unique. I *can* say no more, I *will* say no less.

III

Aug. 14*th,* 1848.

I have already told you, I believe, that I regard Mr. Thackeray as the first of modern masters, and as the legitimate high priest of Truth; I study him accordingly with reverence. He, I see, keeps the mermaid's tail below water, and only hints at the dead men's bones and noxious slime amidst which it wriggles; *but,* his hint is more vivid than other men's elaborate explanations, and never is his satire whetted to so keen an edge as when with quiet mocking irony he modestly recommends to the approbation of the public his own exemplary discretion and forbearance.

The world begins to know Thackeray rather better than it did two years or even a year ago, but as yet it only half knows him. His mind seems to me a fabric as simple and unpretending as it is deep-founded and enduring—there is no meretricious ornament to attract or fix a superficial glance; his great distinction of the genuine is one that can only be fully appreciated with time. There is something, a sort of "still profound," revealed in the concluding part of *Vanity Fair* which the discernment of one generation will not suffice to fathom. A hundred years hence, if he only lives to do justice to himself, he will be better known than he is now. A hundred years hence, some thoughtful critic, standing and looking down on the deep waters, will see shining through them the pearl without price of a purely original mind—such a mind as the Bulwers, etc., his contemporaries have *not*,—not acquirements gained from study, but the thing that came into the world with him—his inherent genius: the thing that made him, I doubt not, different as a child from other children, that caused him, perhaps, peculiar griefs and struggles in life, and that now makes him as a writer unlike other writers. Excuse me for recurring to this theme, I do not wish to bore you.

IV

January 10th, 1850.

Thackeray's Christmas Book at once grieved and pleased me, as most of his writings do. I have come to the conclusion that whenever he writes, Mephistopheles stands on his right hand and Raphael on his left; the great doubter and sneerer usually guides the pen, the Angel, noble and gentle, interlines letters of light here and there. Alas! Thackeray, I wish your strong wings would lift you oftener above the smoke of cities into the pure region nearer heaven!

The Chinese Fidelity and Miniature Delicacy of Jane Austen

Charlotte Brontë to W. S. Williams

April 12th, 1850.

I have likewise read one of Miss Austen's works—*Emma*—read it with interest and with just the degree of admiration which Miss Austen herself would have thought sensible and suitable. Anything like warmth or enthusiasm—anything energetic, poignant, heart-felt is utterly out of place in commending these works: all such demonstration the authoress would have met with a well-bred sneer, would have calmly scorned as outré and extravagant. She does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of genteel English people curiously well. There is a Chinese fidelity, a miniature delicacy in the painting. She ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound. The passions are perfectly unknown to her; she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy sisterhood. Even to the feelings she vouchsafes no more than an occasional graceful but distant recognition—too frequent converse with them would ruffle the smooth elegance of her progress. Her business is not half so much with the human heart as with the human eyes, mouth, hands, and feet. What sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study; but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of life and the sentient target of death—this Miss Austen ignores. She no more, with her mind's eye, beholds the heart of her race than each man, with bodily vision, sees the heart in his heaving breast. Jane Austen was a complete and most sensible lady, but a very incomplete and rather insensible (*not senseless*) woman.

If this is heresy, I cannot help it. If I said it to some people (Lewes for instance) they would directly accuse me of advocating exaggerated heroics, but I am not afraid of your falling into any such vulgar error.—Believe me, yours sincerely, C. Brontë.

Arranging the Poets in the Order of Their Morality

Edward FitzGerald to John Allen

Wherstead, *July* 4, 1835.

What you say of Tennyson and Wordsworth is not, I think, wholly just. I don't think that a man can turn himself so directly to the service of morality, unless naturally inclined: I think Wordsworth's is a natural bias that way. Besides, one must have labourers of different kinds in the vineyard of morality, which I certainly look up to as the chief object of our cultivation: Wordsworth is first in the craft: but Tennyson does no little by raising and filling the brain with noble images and thoughts, which, if they do not direct us to our duty, purify and cleanse us from mean and vicious objects, and so prepare and fit us for the reception of the higher philosophy. A man might forsake a drunken party to read Byron's Corsair: and Byron's Corsair for Shelley's Alastor: and the Alastor for the Dream of Fair Women or the Palace of Art: and then I won't say he would forsake these two last for anything of Wordsworth's, but his mind would be sufficiently refined and spiritualised to admit Wordsworth, and profit by him: and he might keep all the former imaginations as so many pictures, or pieces of music, in his mind. But I think you will see Tennyson acquire all that at present you miss: when he has felt life, he will not die fruitless of instruction to man as he is. But I dis-

like this kind of criticism, especially in a letter. I don't know any one who has thought out anything so little as I have. I don't see to any end, and should keep silent till I have got a little more, and that little better arranged.

I am sorry that all this page is filled with this botheration, when I have a thousand truer and better things that I want to talk to you about. I will write to you again soon.

Sophocles is a Pure Greek Temple, but Æschylus Troubles Men with His Grandeur and His Gloom

Edward FitzGerald to E. B. Cowell

(?1848.)

I do not know that I praised Xenophon's imagination in recording such things as Alcibiades at Lampsacus;[1] all I meant to say was that the history was not dull which does record such facts, if it be for the imagination of others to quicken them. . . . As to Sophocles, I will not give up my old Titan. Is there not an infusion of Xenophon in Sophocles, as compared to Æschylus,—a dilution? Sophocles is doubtless the better artist, the more complete; but are we to expect anything but glimpses and ruins of the divinest? Sophocles is a pure Greek temple; but Æschylus is a rugged mountain, lashed by seas, and riven by thunderbolts: and which is the most wonderful, and appalling? Or if one will have Æschylus too a work of man, I say he is like a Gothic Cathedral, which the Germans say did rise from the genius of man aspiring up to the immeasurable, and reaching after the infinite in complexity and gloom, according as Christianity elevated and widened men's minds. A dozen lines of Æschylus have a more Almighty power on me than all Sophocles' plays;

[1] *Hellenica*, II., i., 25.

though I would perhaps rather save Sophocles, as the consummation of Greek art, than Æschylus' twelve lines, if it came to a choice which must be lost. Besides these Æschyluses *trouble* us with their grandeur and gloom; but Sophocles is always soothing, complete, and satisfactory.

He is not Pleased with the Idylls of the King

Edward FitzGerald to E. B. Cowell

Woodbridge: *Tuesday*
28 *Dec.*, 1869.

Your Letter today was a real pleasure—nay, a comfort—to me. For I had begun to think that, for whatever reason, you had dropt me; and I know not one of all my friends whom I could less afford to lose.

You anticipate rightly all I think of the new Idylls. I had bought the Book at Lowestoft: and when I returned here for Christmas found that A. T.'s Publisher had sent me a copy. As I suppose this was done by A. T.'s order, I have written to acknowledge the Gift, and to tell him something, if not all, of what I think of them. I do not tell him that I think his hand weakened; but I tell him (what is very true) that, though the main Myth of King Arthur's Dynasty in Britain has a certain Grandeur in my Eyes, the several legendary fragments of it never did much interest me; excepting the *Morte,* which I suppose most interested him also, as he took it up first of all. I am not sure if such a Romance as Arthur's is not best told in the artless old English in which it was told to Arthur's artless successors four hundred years ago; or dished up anew in something of a Ballad Style like his own Lady of Shalott, rather than elaborated into a modern Epic form. I never cared, however, for *any* chivalric Epic; neither Tasso, nor Spenser, nor even Ariosto, whose Epic has a

sort of Ballad-humour in it; Don Quixote is the only one of all this sort I have ever cared for.

I certainly wish that Alfred had devoted his diminished powers to translating Sophocles, or Æschylus, as I fancy a Poet should do—*one* work, at any rate—of his great Predecessors. But Pegasus won't be harnessed.

That Scott Resembles Homer in the Simplicity of His Story; and that Miss Austen Never Goes Out of the Parlour

Edward FitzGerald to W. F. Pollock

Woodbridge, *Dec.* 24 [1871].

The Pirate is, I know, not one of Scott's best; the Women, Minna, Brenda, Norna, are poor theatrical figures. But Magnus and Jack Bunce and Claud Halcro (though the latter rather wearisome) are substantial enough: how wholesomely they swear! and no one ever thinks of blaming Scott for it. There is a passage where the Company at Burgh Westra are summoned by Magnus to go down to the Shore to see the Boats go off to the Deep Sea fishing, and "they followed his stately step to the Shore as the Herd of Deer follows the leading Stag, with all manner of respectful Observance." This, coming in at the close of the preceding unaffected Narrative is to me like Homer, whom Scott really resembles in the simplicity and ease of his Story. This is far more poetical in my Eyes than all the Effort of —— ——, etc. And which of them has written such a Lyric as "Farewell to Northmaven"? I finished the Book with Sadness; thinking I might never read it again. . . .

P.S. Can't you send me your Paper about the Novelists? As to which is the best of all I can't say: that Rich-

ardson (with all his twaddle) is better than Fielding, I am quite certain. There is nothing at all comparable to Lovelace in all Fielding, whose Characters are common and vulgar types; of Squires, Ostlers, Lady's Maids, etc., very easily drawn. I am equally sure that Miss Austen cannot be third, any more than first or second: I think you were rather drawn away by a fashion when you put her there: and really old Spedding seems to me to have been the Stag whom so many followed in that fashion. She is capital as far as she goes: but she never goes out of the Parlour; if but Magnus Troil, or Jack Bunce, or even one of Fielding's Brutes, would but dash in upon the Gentility and swear a round Oath or two! I must think the "Woman in White," with her Count Fosco, far beyond all that. Cowell constantly reads Miss Austen at night after his Sanskirt Philology is done: it composes him, like Gruel: or like Paisiello's Music, which Napoleon liked above all other, because he said it didn't interrupt his Thoughts.

Literary Prejudices, Together with an Anecdote about His "Daddy"

Edward FitzGerald to C. E. Norton

Woodbridge, *Fe.* 7, '76.

Dante's face I have not seen these ten years: only his Back on my Book Shelf. What Mr. Lowell[1] says of him recalled to me what Tennyson said to me some thirty-five or forty years ago. We were stopping before a shop in Regent Street where were two Figures of Dante and Goethe. I (I suppose) said, "What is there in old Dante's Face that is missing in Goethe's?" And Tennyson (whose Profile then had certainly a remarkable likeness to Dante's) said: "The Divine." Then Milton; I don't think I've read him

[1] In *Among My Books.* First series.

these forty years; the whole Scheme of the Poem, and certain Parts of it, looming as grand as anything in my Memory; but I never could read ten lines together without stumbling at some Pedantry that tipped me at once out of Paradise, or even Hell, into the Schoolroom, worse than either. Tennyson again used to say that the two grandest of all Similes were those of the Ships hanging in the Air, and "the Gunpowder one," which he used slowly and grimly to enact, in the Days that are no more. He certainly then thought Milton the sublimest of all the Gang; his Diction modelled on Virgil, as perhaps Dante's.

Spenser I never could get on with, and (spite of Mr. Lowell's good word) shall still content myself with such delightful Quotations from him as one lights upon here and there: the last from Mr. Lowell.

Then, old "Daddy Wordsworth," as he was sometimes called, I am afraid, from my Christening, he is now, I suppose, passing under the Eclipse consequent on the Glory which followed his obscure Rise. I remember fifty years ago at our Cambridge, when the Battle was fighting for him by the Few against the Many of us who only laughed at "Louisa in the Shade," etc. His Brother was then Master of Trinity College; like all Wordsworths (unless the drowned Sailor) pompous and priggish. He used to drawl out the Chapel responses so that we called him the "Mēēserable Sinner" and his brother the "Mēēserable Poet." Poor fun enough; but I never can forgive the Lakers all who first despised, and then patronised "Walter Scott," as they loftily called him: and He, dear, noble, Fellow, thought they were quite justified. Well, your Emerson has done him far more Justice than his own Countryman Carlyle, who won't allow him to be a Hero in any ways, but sets up such a cantankerous narrow-minded Bigot as John Knox in his stead. I did go to worship at

Abbotsford, as to Stratford on Avon: and say that it was good to have so done. If you, if Mr. Lowell, have not lately read it, pray read Lockhart's account of his Journey to Douglas Dale on (I think) July 18 or 19, 1831. It is a piece of Tragedy, even to the muttering Thunder, like the Lammermuir, which does not look very small beside Peter Bell and Co.

My dear Sir, this is a desperate Letter; and that last Sentence will lead to another dirty little Story about my Daddy: to which you must listen or I should feel like the Fine Lady in one of Vanburgh's Plays, "Oh my God, that you won't listen to a Woman of Quality when her Heart is bursting with Malice!" And perhaps you on the other Side of the Great Water may be amused with a little of your old Granny's Gossip.

Well then: about 1826, or 7, Professor Airy (now our Astronomer Royal) and his Brother William called on the Daddy at Rydal. In the course of Conversation Daddy mentioned that sometimes when genteel Parties came to visit him, he contrived to slip out of the room, and down the garden walk to where "The Party's" travelling Carriage stood. This Carriage he would look into to see what Books they carried with them: and he observed it was generally "Walter Scott's." It was Airy's Brother (a very veracious man, and an Admirer of Wordsworth, but, to be sure, more of Sir Walter) who told me this. It is this conceit that diminishes Wordsworth's stature among us, in spite of the mountain Mists he lived among. Also, a little stinginess; not like Sir Walter in that! I remember Hartley Coleridge telling us at Ambleside how Professor Wilson and some one else (H. C. himself perhaps) stole a Leg of Mutton from Wordsworth's Larder for the fun of the Thing.

Here then is a long Letter of old world Gossip from

the old Home. I hope it won't tire you out: it need not, you know.

"Pauvre et Triste Humanité"

I

Edward FitzGerald to Mrs. Kemble

April, 1881.

My dear Mrs. Kemble,

Somewhat before my usual time, you see; but Easter comes, and I shall be glad to hear if you keep it in London, or elsewhere. Elsewhere there has been no inducement to go till today: when the Wind though yet East has turned to the Southern side of it; one can walk without any wrapper; and I dare to fancy we have turned the corner of Winter at last. People talk of changed Seasons: only yesterday I was reading in my dear old Sévigné, how she was with the Duke and Duchess of Chaulnes at their Château of Chaulnes in Picardy all but two hundred years ago: that is in 1689: and the green has not as yet ventured to shew its "nez" nor a Nightingale to sing. You see that I have returned to her as for some Spring Music, at any rate. As for the Birds, I have nothing but a Robin who seemed rather pleased when I sit down on a Bench under an old Ivied Pollard, where I suppose he has a Nest, poor little Fellow. But we have terrible Superstitions about him here; no less than that he always kills his Parents if he can: my young Reader is quite determined on this head: and there lately has been a Paper in some Magazine to the same effect.

My dear old Spedding sent me back to old Wordsworth too, who sings (his best songs I think) about the Mountains and Lakes they were both associated with: and with a quiet feeling he sings that somehow comes home to me more now than ever it did before.

As to Carlyle, I thought on my first reading that he must have been *égaré* at the time of writing: a condition which I well remember saying to Spedding long ago that one of his temperament might likely fall into. And now I see that Mrs. Oliphant hints at something of the sort. Hers I think an admirable Paper: better than has yet been written, or (I believe) is likely to be written by any one else. . . . I must think Carlyle's judgments mostly, or mainly, true; but that he must have "lost his head" if not when he recorded them, yet when he left them in any one's hands to decide on their publication. Especially when not about Public Men, but about their Families. It is slaying the Innocent with the Guilty. But of all this you have doubtless heard in London more than enough. "Pauvre et triste humanité!" One's heart opens again to him at the last: sitting alone in the middle of her Room. "I want to die." "I want—a Mother." "Ah mamma Letizia!" Napoleon is said to have murmured as he lay. By way of pendant to this recurs to me the Story that when Ducis was wretched his Mother would lay his head on her Bosom—"Ah, mon homme! mon pauvre homme!"

And now I have written more than enough for yourself and me: whose Eyes may be the worse for it to-morrow. I still go about in Blue Glasses, and flinch from Lamp and Candle. Pray let me know about your own Eyes, and your own Self; and believe me always sincerely yours.

LITTLEGRANGE.

II

Edward FitzGerald to C. E. Norton

Woodbridge, *May* 12, '83.

MY DEAR NORTON,

Your Emerson-Carlyle of course interested me very much, as I believe a large public also. I had most to learn

of Emerson, and that all good: but Carlyle came out in somewhat of a new light to me also. Now we have him in his Jane's letters, as we had seen something of him before in the Reminiscences: but a yet more tragic Story; so tragic that I know not if it ought not to have been withheld from the Public: assuredly, it seems to me, ought to have been but half of the whole that now is. But I do not the less recognise Carlyle for more admirable than before—if for no other reason than his thus furnishing the world with weapons against himself which the World in general is glad to turn against him. . . .

And, by way of finishing what I have to say on Carlyle for the present, I will tell you that I had to go up to our huge, hideous London a week ago, on disagreeable business; which Business, however, I got over in time for me to run to Chelsea before I returned home at Evening. I wanted to see the Statue on the Chelsea Embankment which I had not yet seen: and the old No. 5 of Cheyne Row, which I had not seen for five and twenty years. The Statue I thought very good, though somewhat small and ill set-off by its dingy surroundings. And No. 5 (now 24), which had cost her so much of her Life, one may say, to make habitable for him, now all neglected, unswept, ungarnished, uninhabited

"TO LET"

I cannot get it out of my head, the tarnished Scene of the Tragedy (one must call it) there enacted.

Well, I was glad to get away from it, and the London of which it was a small part, and get down here to my own dull home, and by no means sorry not to be a Genius at such a Cost. "Parlons d'autres choses."

Discovering the Brontë Literature

James Smetham to ——

8th Jan., 1856.

I have just finished *Villette* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall,* having been seized with a desire and determination to know the whole Brontë literature; half impatient that I should be so swayed out of my regular course as to study with interest five novels. But indeed these things, though they contain some elements of the ordinary "founts of fictive tears," are of another cast and purport to all other books. They are—Currer Bell's particularly—so far autobiographic that one looks on them to be important revelations of a life that has been lived, and of thoughts that have been thought; no frivolous unworthy, ambitious life either, but something pure, strong, deep, tender, true, and reverential; something that teaches one how to live.

I know this, that I perceive principles and motives and purposes nobler than my own in several aspects of that quiet, shy, observant, and yet powerful nature which calls itself "Jane Eyre" and "Lucy Snowe," and hovers over Shirley and Caroline Helstone as their presiding genius and instinct.

It is of no use for me to spurn the teaching because I have got it from a source I do not generally acknowledge as authoritative, nor to reply that it is fiction. What I refer to is not fiction, it is what has been lived, and may be lived. It is moral, and not imaginative, in its origin, and does not come (as I think) from a healthy or perfect moral nature, but from a noble one nevertheless. It reminds one of the Prometheus Vinctus; an enduring, age-long suffering, unquenchable spirit, beset and bound by vast powers, Strength and Force; and accompanied by a wailing chorus who alternately cheer and depress it; with the vulture eter-

nally gnawing, and the chain eternally galling it; never complaining, never undignified, and ever seeing beyond the present suffering the scintillations of distant sunrises, and hearing the music of invisible plumes "winnowing the crimson dawn," or the silver spikes of the aurora lace the hemisphere with crackling whispers.

As to Wuthering Heights I can't find in my heart to criticise the book. If I were walking with you over those empurpled fells for an autumn day, startling the moor sheep and the lapwing with passionate talk, I could not criticise what I said or what you said. It would become sacred. The remembrance of it would make my heart swell and the tears come to my eyes in the midst of the stern, hard life of the city. And yet, if I could see it to be a duty, I should greatly enjoy shutting myself up in a lone farmhouse for three days in the winter to write a criticism on it. It is a wild, wailing, moorland wind, full of that unutterable love and anguish and mystery and passion which form the substratum of high natures. Turner has a landscape which is *it*. It *is* those wild hills, and a storm is *wuthering* over them, and the molten lightning is licking the heather, and nobody knows it but the one solitary soul, which he has not put there, who is watching it from a window in the waste.

VII

Miscellaneous Verdicts

Handel's gods are like Homer's, and his sublime never reaches beyond the region of the clouds.

Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883)

"'Crōme—Crōme—Crōme!' blows the solemn wind of Fame, eerier than ever."

James Smetham (1821-1889)

"The fault of all German culture and the weakness of all German genius."

Sidney Lanier (1842-1881)

Handel's Gods are Like Homer's, and His Sublime Never Reaches Beyond the Region of the Clouds

Edward FitzGerald to F. Tennyson

London, *February* 6, 1842.

You talk of your Naples: and that one cannot understand Theocritus without having been on those shores. I tell you, you can't understand Macready without coming to London and seeing his revival of Acis and Galatea. You enter Drury Lane at a quarter to seven: the pit is already nearly full: but you find a seat, and a very pleasant one. Box doors open and shut; ladies take off their shawls and seat themselves: gentlemen twist their side curls: the musicians come up from under the stage one by one; 'tis just upon seven. Macready is very punctual: Mr. T. Cooke is in his place with his marshal's baton in his hand: he lifts it up: and off they set with old Handel's noble overture. As it is playing, the red velvet curtain (which Macready has substituted, not wisely, for the old green one) draws apart: and you see a rich drop scene, all festooned and arabesqued with River Gods, Nymphs, and their emblems; and in the centre a delightful large, good copy of Poussin's great landscape (of which I used to have a print in my rooms) where the Cyclops is seen seated on a mountain, looking over the sea-shore. The overture ends, the drop scene rises, and there is the sea-shore, a long curling bay: the sea heaving under the moon, and breaking upon the beach, and rolling the surf down—the stage! This really

capitally done. But enough of description. The choruses were well sung, and acted, well-dressed, and well-grouped; and the whole thing creditable and pleasant. Do you know the music? It is of Handel's best: and as classical as any man who wore a full-bottomed wig could write. I think Handel never gets out of his wig: that is, out of his age: his Hallelujah chorus is a chorus not of angels, but of well-fed earthly choristers, ranged tier above tier in a Gothic Cathedral, with princes for audience, and their military trumpets flourishing over the full volume of the organ. Handel's gods are like Homer's, and his sublime never reaches beyond the region of the clouds. Therefore I think that his great marches, triumphal pieces, and coronation anthems, are his finest works. There is a little bit of Auber's, at the end of the Bayadère when the God resumes his divinity and retires into the sky, which has more of pure light and mystical solemnity than anything I know of Handel's: but then this is only a scrap: whereas old Handel's coursers, with necks with thunder clothed and long resounding pace, never tire. Beethoven thought more deeply also: but I don't know if he could sustain himself so well. I suppose you will resent this praise of Beethoven: but you must be tired of the whole matter, written as it is in this vile hand: and so here is an end of it. . . . And now I am going to put on my night-cap: for my paper is nearly ended, and the iron tongue of St. Paul's, as reported by an East wind, has told twelve. This is the last news from the city. So Good night.

"'Crōme—Crōme—Crōme!' Blows the Solemn Wind of Fame, Eerier than Ever"

James Smetham to T. A.

Sunday, 10 a. m. *August,* 1875.

"O day most calm, most bright!"

Landseer's Hunted Stag in "The Sanctuary," where "nor hound nor huntsman shall his lair molest," among the peaceful echoing evening hills and the lonely rush of the disturbed wild ducks from the water flags into the amber air. This is not seldom the feeling with which I escape from the howling pack of week-day cares.

JOHN CROME—BORN in Norwich, 1769—1821
Apprenticed to coach builder.
Became Drawing Master.
Painted in leisure.

When I was a boy he was known among small dealers as "Old Crome." He was only 52 when he died. The name brought up the image of a venerable old fogey painting up to extreme old age. During the last ten years his pictures have been brought to the front, and he is called "John Crome." Some of his works are in the National Gallery, and at sales his pictures fetch large prices.

Had an hour of delightful dwelling on his unknown career last evening. The works are the man, and if the man be able to put soul into them, whether he paint in a little house in Norwich or in a London studio matters little—nor how his picture is first sold. It may be bought after much talk by some little householder for £5. That is a vast sum. It hangs for years in the glimmer of the little back parlour, and no man knows much about it. Whether John Crome were married or single I know not;

but probably he was married and his family large. Being a coach painter at first and a good deep painter afterwards, he could not be much beside. But what matter? Where would his scraps of Latin and Greek have been now? While he lived he might have made better way with a transitory forgotten squire if he could quote Horace, but he and the squire are a prey to dumb forgetfulness—except—except what found its way to the point of his brush; his serious, sunny, all simple, all rich and happy views of the grandeur of the nooks of nature; the solemn, quiet corners where gray palings become impressive because of their weather marks and boundary marking and other subtle associations with nature and humanity.

You meet him in your morning or evening walk, a little dingy, not at all gentlemanly, not like "quoloty" who pass him on horseback to their tombs among the forgotten. He has his leather-backed sketch-book out, and is taking a memorandum of some little black pool under oak roots, his bosom quietly glowing with the sense of grandeur and unutterable solemnity. He pockets his book and walks on; the black pool and its weird growths rendered through the crucible of feeling and thought, and not wholly "like nature" (nature involved with man, which is art and poetry)—this picture now moves all kindred souls in now one exhibition, now another. Docks and weeds and peaty waters were nothing to talk about, but moving as the haunts of Keats' Pan when shaped by the coach painter's stubby brush, too manly to condescend to thin lines and photographic dottings. So whether he were communicative or close, shy or genial, good tempered or bad, a man with many friends raining "Good mornings" all around, or a sort of water hen scarce known except to his quaint kind—a few of the same sort—what has that to do with it now? Mark it with your brush, seal it in a monument.

Arthur himself "passes." So with contemporary opinion. What thought the wealthy Norwich lawyer, with his frill and his weight, at Norwich dinner parties in 1800? "Mr. Quiddity, I should like to know what you think of the oils pictures of my daughter's drawing-master?" "What, Jack Crome? I knew him when he went 'prentice to old Axletree, and a lazy young dog he was. His oil paintings, ma-am? I'm no great judge, they look rather rough and fuzzy to me. Ought to go to Italy and see some of the Claudes I saw there in the year 1770."

"Where be his quiddities now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks," and his opinion of Jack Crome?

"Crōme—Crōme—Crōme!" blows the solemn wind of Fame, eerier than ever—and the black pool with its crooked roots and strange overgrowth and "pipey hemlock" looks, all silent and revealing nothing, into the face of new generations.

"The Fault of All German Culture and the Weakness of All German Genius"

Sidney Lanier to his Wife

New York, *Sunday, October* 18, 1874.

I have been in my room all day; and have just concluded a half-dozen delicious hours, during which I have been devouring with a hungry ferocity of rapture which I know not how to express, "The Life of Robert Schumann," by his pupil, von Wasielewski. The pupil, I am sure, did not fully comprehend his great master. I think the key to Schumann's whole character, with all its labyrinthine and often disappointing peculiarities, is this: That he had no mode of self-expression, or, I should rather say, of self-

expansion, besides the musical mode. This may seem a strange remark to make of him who was the founder and prolific editor of a great musical journal and who perhaps exceeded any musician of his time in general culture. But I do not mean that he was confined to music for self-expression, though indeed, the sort of critical writing which Schumann did so much of is not at all like poetry in its tranquillizing effect upon the soul of the writer. What I do mean is that his sympathies were not *big* enough, he did not go through the awful struggle of genius, and lash and storm and beat about until his soul was grown large enough to embrace the whole of life and the All of things, that is, large enough to appreciate (if even without understanding) the magnificent designs of God, and tall enough to stand in the trough of the awful cross-waves of circumstance and look over their heights along the whole sea of God's manifold acts, and deep enough to admit the peace that passeth understanding. This is, indeed, the fault of all German culture, and the weakness of all German genius. A great artist should have the sensibility and expressive genius of Schumann, the calm grandeur of Lee, the human breadth of Shakespeare, all in one.

Now in this particular, of being open, unprejudiced, and unenvious, Schumann soars far above his brother Germans; he valiantly defended our dear Chopin, and other young musicians who were struggling to make head against the abominable pettiness of German prejudice. But, withal, I cannot find that his life was great, as a whole: I cannot see him caring for his land, for the poor, for religion, for humanity: he was always a restless soul; and the ceaseless wear of incompleteness finally killed, as a maniac, him whom a broader Love might have kept alive as a glorious artist to this day.

The truth is, the world does not require enough at the

hands of genius. Under the special plea of greater sensibilities, and of consequent greater temptations, it excuses its gifted ones, and even sometimes makes "a law of their weakness." But this is wrong: the sensibility of genius is just as much greater to high emotions as to low ones; and whilst it subjects to stronger temptations, it at the same time interposes—if it *will*—stronger considerations for resistance.

These are scarcely fair things to be saying *apropos* of Robert Schumann; for I do not think he was ever guilty of any excesses of genius—as they are called: I only mean them to apply to the *unrest* of his life.

—And yet, for all I have said, how his music does burn in my soul! It stretches me upon the very rack of delight; I know no musician that fills me so full of heavenly anguish, and if I had to give up all the writers of music save one, my one should be Robert Schumann.

VIII

Rhymed Epistles

"What things have we seen
Done at the '*Mermaid*'!"

Francis Beaumont (1584-1616)

A reply to a Christmas invitation.

Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774)

The news at Oney.

William Cowper (1731-1800)

"The heart ay's the part ay,
That makes us right or wrang."

Robert Burns (1759-1796)

Enchanted.

John Keats (1795-1821)

An invitation to come fishing in Wales.

Charles Kingsley (1819-1875)

Winter forenoons in the Parliament House.

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

"What Things Have We Seen Done at the 'Mermaid'!"

Master Francis Beaumont's Letter to Ben Jonson

["*Written before he and Master Fletcher came to London, with two of the precedent comedies, then not finished, which deferred their merry meeting at the* Mermaid."]

The sun (which doth the greatest comfort bring
To absent friends, because the selfsame thing
They know, they see, however absent) is
Here our best hay-maker (forgive me this;
It is our country's style): in this warm shine
I lie, and dream of your full Mermaid wine.
Oh, we have water mixed with claret lees,
Drink apt to bring in drier heresies
Than beer, good only for the sonnet's strain,
With fustian metaphors to stuff the brain;
So mixed that, given to the thirstiest one,
'Twill not prove alms, unless he have the stone:
I think with one draught man's invention fades,
Two cups had quite spoiled Homer's *Iliads*;
'Tis liquor that will find out Sutcliffe's wit:
Lie where he will, and make him write worse yet:
Filled with such moisture, in most grievous qualms,
Did Robert Wisdom write his singing psalms;
And so must I do this; and yet I think
It is a potion sent us down to drink,
By special Providence, keeps us from fights,
Makes us not laugh when we make legs to knights;

'Tis this that keeps our minds fit for our states,
A medicine to obey our magistrates;
For we do live more free than you; no hate,
No envy at one another's happy state,
Moves us; we are all equal; every whit
Of land, that God gives men here is their wit,
If we consider fully; for our best
And gravest man will with his main house-jest
Scarce please you; we want subtilty to do
The city tricks, lie, hate, and flatter too;
Here are none that can bear a painted show,
Strike when you wince, and then lament the blow:
Who, like mills set the right way for to grind,
Can make their grain alike with every wind;
Only some fellows, with the subtlest pate
Amongst us, may perchance equivocate
At selling of a horse, and that's the most;
Methinks the little wit I had is lost
Since I saw you; for wit is like a rest
Held up at tennis, which men do the best
With the best gamesters. What things have we seen
Done at the *Mermaid!* heard words that have been
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one from whence they came
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And had resolved to live a fool the rest
Of his dull life; then where there hath been thrown
Wit able enough to justify the town
For three days past: wit that might warrant be
For the whole city to talk foolishly,
Till that were cancelled; and when that was gone,
We left an air behind us, which alone
Was able to make the next two companies
Right witty; though but downright fools, more wise:

When I remember this, and see that now
The country gentlemen begin to allow
My wit for dry bobs, then I needs must cry,
I see my days of ballating grow nigh;
I can already riddle, and can sing
Catches, sell bargains, and I fear shall bring
Myself to speak the hardest word I find
Over as oft as any, with one wind
That takes no medicines. But one thought of thee
Makes me remember all these things to be
The wit of our young men, fellows that shew
No part of good, yet utter all they know;
Who, like trees of the gard, have growing souls.
Only strong Destiny, which all controls,
I hope hath left a better fate in store
For me, thy friend, than to live ever poor,
Banished unto this home. Fate once again
Bring me to thee, who canst make smooth and plain
The way of knowledge for me, and then I
Who have no good but in thy company,
Protest it will my greatest comfort be
To acknowledge all I have to flow from thee.
Ben, when these scenes are perfect, we'll taste wine;
I'll drink thy Muse's health, thou shalt quaff mine.

A Reply to a Christmas Invitation

Oliver Goldsmith to Mrs. Bunbury[1]

December, 1772.

Madam,—

I read your letter with all that allowance which critical candour could require, but after all find so much to object to, and so much to raise my indignation, that I cannot help

[1] Whose sister was Mary Horneck, known amongst her friends as the *Jessamy Bride*, with whom Goldsmith is supposed to have been in love.

giving it a serious answer.—I am not so ignorant, madam, as not to see there are many sarcasms contained in it, and solecisms also. (Solecism is a word that comes from the town of Soleis in Attica, among the Greeks, built by Solon, and applied as we use the word Kidderminster for curtains from a town also of that name—but this is learning you have no taste for!)—I say, madam, there are many sarcasms in it, and solecisms also. But not to seem an ill-natured critic, I'll take leave to quote your own words, and give you my remarks upon them as they occur. You begin as follows:

> I hope, my good Doctor, you soon will be here,
> And your spring-velvet coat very smart will appear,
> To open our ball the first day of the year.

Pray, madam, where did you ever find the epithet "good" applied to the title of doctor? Had you called me "learned doctor," or "grave doctor," or "noble doctor," it might be allowable, because they belong to the profession. But, not to cavil at trifles, you talk of my "spring-velvet coat," and advise me to wear it the first day in the year, that is, in the middle of winter!—a spring-velvet coat in the middle of winter! ! ! That would be a solecism indeed! and yet, to increase the inconsistence, in another part of your letter you call me a beau. Now, on one side or other you must be wrong. If I am a beau, I can never think of wearing a spring-velvet in winter; and if I am not a beau, why then, that explains itself. But let me go on to your two next strange lines:

> And bring with you a wig, that is modish and gay,
> To dance with the girls that are makers of hay.

The absurdity of making hay at Christmas you yourself seem sensible of: you say your sister will laugh; and so indeed she well may! The Latins have an expression for a

contemptuous kind of laughter, *naso contemnere adunco;* that is, to laugh with a crooked nose. She may laugh at you in the manner of the ancients if she thinks fit. But now I come to the most extraordinary of all extraordinary propositions, which is, to take your and your sister's advice in playing at loo. The presumption of the offer raises my indignation beyond the bounds of prose; it inspires me at once with verse and resentment. I take advice? and from whom? You shall hear:

First let me suppose, what may shortly be true,
The company set, and the word to be Loo:
All smirking, and pleasant, and big with adventure,
And ogling the stake which is fixed in the centre.
Round and round go the cards, while I inwardly damn
At never once finding a visit from Pam.
I lay down my stake, apparently cool,
While the harpies about me all pocket the pool.
I fret in my gizzard, yet, cautious and sly,
I wish all my friends may be bolder than I:
Yet still they sit snug, not a creature will aim
By losing their money to venture at fame. . . .
'What does Mrs. Bunbury?' . . . 'I, Sir? I pass.'
'Pray what does Miss Horneck? take courage, come, do.'
'Who, I? let me see, Sir, why I must pass too.'
Mr. Bunbury frets, and I fret like the devil,
To see them so cowardly, lucky, and civil.
Yet still I sit snug, and continue to sigh on,
Till, made by my losses as bold as a lion,
I venture at all, while my avarice regards
The whole pool as my own . . . 'Come, give me five cards.'
'Well done!' cry the ladies: 'Ah, Doctor, that's good!
The pool's very rich, . . . ah! the Doctor is loo'd!'
Thus foil'd in my courage, on all sides perplext,

I ask for advice from the lady that's next.'
'Pray, ma'am, be so good as to give your advice:
Don't you think the best way is to venture for't twice?'
'I advise,' cries the lady, 'to try it, I own. . . .'
'Ah! the Doctor is loo'd! Come, Doctor, put down.'
Thus, playing, and playing, I still grow more eager,
And so bold, and so bold, I'm at last a bold beggar.
Now, ladies, I ask, if law matters you're skill'd in,
Whether crimes such as yours should not come before Fielding
For giving advice that is not worth a straw,
May well be call'd picking of pockets in law;
And picking of pockets, with which I now charge ye,
Is, by quinto Elizabeth, Death without Clergy.
What justice, when both to the Old Bailey brought!
By the gods, I'll enjoy it, though 'tis but in thought!
Both are placed at the bar, with all proper decorum,
With bunches of fennel, and nosegays before 'em;
Both cover their faces with mobs and all that,
But the judge bids them, angrily, take off their hat.
When uncover'd, a buzz of inquiry runs round,
'Pray what are their crimes?' . . . 'They've been pilfering found.'
'But pray who have they pilfer'd?' . . . 'A doctor, I hear.'
'What, yon solemn-faced, odd-looking man that stands near?'
'The same.' . . . 'What a pity! how does it surprise one,
'Two handsomer culprits I never set eyes on!'
Then their friends all come round me with cringing and leering,
To melt me to pity, and soften my swearing.
First Sir Charles advances, with phrases well-strung,

'Consider, dear Doctor, the girls are but young.'
'The younger the worse,' I return him again.
'It shows that their habits are all dyed in grain.'
'But then they're so handsome, one's bosom it grieves.'
'What signifies *handsome,* when people are thieves?'
'But where is your justice? their cases are hard.'
'What signifies *justice?* I want the *reward.*'

'There's the parish of Edmonton offers forty pounds; there's the parish of St. Leonard, Shoreditch, offers forty pounds; there's the parish of Tyburn, from the Hog-in-the-pound to St. Giles's watch-house, offers forty pounds,—I shall have all that if I convict them!'—

'But consider their case, . . . it may yet be your own!
And see how they kneel! Is your heart made of stone?'
This moves! . . . so at last I agree to relent,
For ten pounds in hand, and ten pounds to be spent.

I challenge you all to answer this: I tell you, you cannot. It cuts deep. But now for the rest of the letter: and next—but I want room—so I believe I shall battle the rest out at Barton some day next week—I don't value you all?

O. G.

The News at Olney

William Cowper to the Rev. John Newton

July 12, 1781.

My very dear Friend,—I am going to send, what when you have read, you may scratch your head, and say, I suppose, there's nobody knows, whether what I have got be verse or not: by the tune and the time, it ought to be rhyme; but if it be, did you ever see, of late or of yore, such a ditty before? The thought did occur to me and to her, as Madam and I, did walk and not fly, over hills and dales, with spreading sails, before it was dark, to Weston Park.

The news at *Oney* is little or noney, but such as it is, I send it, viz.—Poor Mr. Peace cannot yet cease addling his head with what you said, and has left parish-church quite in the lurch, having almost swore to go there no more.

Page and his wife, that made such a strife, we met them twain in Dog Lane; we gave them the wall, and that was all. For Mr. Scott, we have seen him not, except as he pass'd, in a wonderful haste, to see a friend in Silver End. Mrs. Jones proposes, ere July closes, that she and her sister, and her Jones Mister, and we that are here, our course shall steer to dine in the Spinney; but for a guinea, if the weather should hold so hot and so cold, we had better by far stay where we are. For the grass there grows while nobody mows (which is very wrong) so rank and long, that, so to speak, 'tis at least a week, if it happens to rain, ere it dries again. I have writ Charity, not for popularity, but as well as I could, in hopes to do good; and if the Reviewer should say "to be sure, the gentleman's Muse wears Methodist shoes; you may know by her pace, and talk about grace, that she and her bard have little regard for the taste and fashions, and ruling passions, and hoidening play, of the modern day; and though she assume a borrowed plume, and now and then wear a tittering air, 'tis only her plan to catch if she can the giddy and gay, as they go that way, by a production on a new construction. She has baited her trap in hopes to snap all that may come with a sugar-plum."—

His opinion in this will not be amiss; 'tis what I intend, my principal end; and if I succeed, and folks should read, till a few are brought to a serious thought, I shall think I am paid for all I have said and all I have done, though I have run, many a time, after a rhyme, as far as from hence to the end of my sense, and by hook or crook, write another book, if I live and am here, another year. I have

heard before, of a room with a floor laid upon springs and such like things, with so much art, in every part, that when you went in, you was forced to begin a minuet pace, with an air and a grace, swimming about, now in and now out, with a deal of state, in a figure of eight, without pipe or string, or any such thing; and now I have writ, in a rhyming fit, what will make you dance, and as you advance, will keep you still, though against your will, dancing away, alert and gay, till you come to an end of what I penn'd; which that you may do ere Madam and you are quite worn out with jigging about, I take my leave, and here you receive a bow profound, down to the ground, from your humble me— W. C.

P.S.—When I concluded, doubtless you did think me right, as well you might, in saying what I said of Scott; and then it was true, but now it is due to him to note, that since I wrote, himself and he has visited we.

"The Heart Ay's the Part Ay, That Makes Us Right or Wrang"

Robert Burns to Davie, a Brother Poet

January, 1784.

I

While winds frae aff Ben-Lomond blaw,
And bar the doors wi' drivin' snaw,
And hing us owre the ingle,
I set me down to pass the time,
And spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,
In hamely, westlin jingle:
While frosty winds blaw in the drift,
Ben to the chimla lug,
I grudge a wee the great-folk's gift,
That live sae bien an' snug:

I tent less, and want less
Their roomy fire-side;
But hanker, and canker,
To see their cursed pride.

II

It's hardly in a body's pow'r,
To keep, at times, frae being sour,
To see how things are shar'd;
How best o' chiels are whyles in want,
While coofs on countless thousands rant,
And ken na how to ware't;
But Davie, lad, ne'er fash your head,
Tho' we hae little gear;
We're fit to win our daily bread,
As lang's we're hale and fier:
"Mair spier na, nor fear na,"
Auld age ne'er mind a feg;
The last o't, the warst o't,
Is only but to beg.

III

To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
When banes are craz'd, and bluid is thin,
Is, doubtless, great distress!
Yet then content could make us blest;
Ev'n then, sometimes, we'd snatch a taste
Of truest happiness.
The honest heart that's free frae a'
Intended fraud or guile,
However Fortune kick the ba',
Has ay some cause to smile;

And mind still, you'll find still,
A comfort this nae sma';
Nae mair then, we'll care then,
Nae farther can we fa'.

IV

What tho', like commoners of air,
We wander out, we know not where.
But either house or hal' ?
Yet Nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound,
To see the coming year:
On braes when we please then,
We'll sit an' sowth a tune;
Syne rhyme till't we'll time till't,
An' sing't when we hae done.

V

It's no in titles nor in rank:
It's no in wealth like Lon'on Bank,
To purchase peace and rest.
It's no in makin' muckle, mair;
It's no in books, it's no in lear,
To make us truly blest:
If happiness hae not her seat
An' centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest!

Nae treasures nor pleasures
Could make us happy lang;
The heart ay's the part ay
That makes us right or wrang.

VI

Think ye, that sic as you and I,
Wha drudge and drive thro' wet and dry,
Wi' never ceasing toil;
Think ye, are we less blest than they,
Wha scarcely tent us in their way,
As hardly worth their while?
Alas! how oft, in haughty mood,
God's creatures they oppress!
Or else, neglecting a' that's guid,
They riot in excess!
Baith careless and fearless
Of either Heaven or Hell;
Esteeming and deeming
It a' an idle tale!

VII

Then let us chearfu' acquiesce,
Nor make our scanty pleasures less
By pining at our state:
And, even should misfortunes come,
I here wha sit hae met wi' some,
An's thankfu' for them yet,
They gie the wit of age to youth;
They let us ken oursel;
They make us see the naked truth,
The real guid and ill:
Tho' losses and crosses
Be lessons right severe,

There's wit there, ye'll get there,
Ye'll find nae other where.

VIII

But tent me, Davie, ace o' hearts!
(To say aught less wad wrang the cartes,
And flatt'ry I detest)
This life has joys for you and I;
And joys that riches ne'er could buy,
And joys the very best.
There's a' the pleasures o' the heart,
The lover an' the frien':
Ye hae your Meg, your dearest part,
And I my darling Jean!
It warms me, it charms me
To mention but her name:
It heats me, it beets me,
And sets me a' on flame!

IX

O all ye Pow'rs who rule above!
O Thou whose very self art love!
Thou know'st my words sincere!
The life-blood streaming thro' my heart,
Or my more dear immortal part,
Is not more fondly dear!
When heart-corroding care and grief
Deprive my soul of rest,
Her dear idea brings relief
And solace to my breast.
Thou Being All-seeing,
O, hear my fervent pray'r!
Still take her, and make her
Thy most peculiar care!

X

All hail! ye tender feelings dear!
The smile of love, the friendly tear,
  The sympathetic glow!
Long since, this world's thorny ways
Had number'd out my weary days,
  Had it not been for you!
Fate still has blest me with a friend
  In every care and ill;
And oft a more endearing band,
  A tie more tender still.
    It lightens, it brightens
      The tenebrific scene,
    To meet with, and greet with
      My Davie or my Jean!

XI

O, how that Name inspires my style!
The words come skelpin' rank an' file,
  Amaist before I ken!
The ready measure rins as fine,
As Phœbus and the famous Nine
  Were glowrin owre my pen.
My spaviet Pegasus will limp,
  Till ance he's fairly het;
And then he'll hilch, an' stilt, an' jimp,
  And rin an unco fit;
    But least then, the beast then
      Should rue this hasty ride,
    I'll light now, and dight now
      His sweaty, wizen'd hide.

Enchanted

John Keats to John Hamilton Reynolds

Little Britain, London

Teignmouth,
25 *March,* 1818.

My dear Reynolds,

In hopes of cheering you through a Minute or two, I was determined will he nill he to send you some lines, so you will excuse the unconnected subject and careless verse. You know, I am sure, Claude's Enchanted Castle, and I wish you may be pleased with my remembrance of it. The Rain is come on again—I think with me Devonshire stands a very poor chance. I shall damn it up hill and down dale, if it keep up to the average of six fine days in three weeks. Let me have better news of you.

Tom's remembrances to you. Remember us to all.

Your affectionate friend,
John Keats.

Dear Reynolds! as last night I lay in bed,
There came before my eyes that wonted thread
Of shapes, and shadows, and remembrances,
That every other minute vex and please:
Things all disjointed come from north and south,
Two Witch's eyes above a Cherub's mouth,
Voltaire with casque and shield and habergeon,
And Alexander with his nightcap on;
Old Socrates a-tying his cravat,
And Hazlitt playing with Miss Edgeworth's cat;
And Junius Brutus, pretty well so so,
Making the best of's way towards Soho.

Few are there who escape these visitings,—
Perhaps one or two whose lives have patent wings,
And thro' whose curtains peeps no hellish nose,
No wild-boar tushes, and no Mermaid's toes;
But flowers bursting out with lusty pride,
And young Æolian harps personify'd;
Some Titian colours touch'd into real life,—
The sacrifice goes on; the pontiff knife
Gleams in the Sun, the milk-white heifer lows,
The pipes go shrilly, the libation flows:
A white sail shows above the green-head cliff,
Moves round the point, and throws her anchor stiff;
The mariners join hymn with those on land.

You know the Enchanted Castle—it doth stand
Upon a rock, on the border of a Lake,
Nested in trees, which all do seem to shake
From some old magic-like Urganda's Sword.
O Phœbus! that I had thy sacred word
To show this Castle, in fair dreaming wise,
Unto my friend, while sick and ill he lies!

You know it well enough, where it doth seem
A mossy place, a Merlin's Hall, a dream;
You know the clear Lake, and the little Isles,
The mountains blue, and cold near neighbour rills,
All which elsewhere are but half animate;
There do they look alive to love and hate,
To smiles and frowns; they seem a lifted mound
Above some giant, pulsing underground.

Part of the Building was a chosen See,
Built by a banish'd Santon of Chaldee;
The other part, two thousand years from him,
Was built by Cuthbert de Saint Aldebrim;

Then there's a little wing, far from the Sun,
Built by a Lapland Witch turn'd maudlin Nun;
And many other juts of aged stone
Founded with many a mason-devil's groan.

The doors all look as if they op'd themselves,
The windows as if latch'd by Fays and Elves,
And from them comes a silver flash of light,
As from the westward of a Summer's night;
Or like a beauteous woman's large blue eyes
Gone mad thro' olden songs and poesies.

See! what is coming from the distance dim!
A golden Galley all in silken trim!
Three rows of oars are lightening, moment whiles,
Into the verd'rous bosoms of those isles;
Towards the shade, under the Castle wall,
It comes in silence,—now 'tis hidden all.
The Clarion sounds, and from the Postern-gate
An echo of sweet music doth create
A fear in the poor Herdsman, who doth bring
His beasts to trouble the enchanted spring,—
He tells of the sweet music, and the spot,
To all his friends, and they believe him not.

O that our dreamings all, of sleep or wake,
Would all their colours from the sunset take:
From something of material sublime,
Rather than shadow our own soul's day-time
In the dark void of night. For in the world
We jostle,—but my flag is not unfurl'd
On the Admiral-staff,—and so philosophize
I dare not yet! Oh, never will the prize,
High reason, and the love of good and ill,
Be my award! Things cannot to the will

Be settled, but they tease us out of thought;
Or is it that imagination brought
Beyond its proper bound, yet still confin'd,
Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,
Cannot refer to any standard law
Of either earth or heaven? It is a flaw
In happiness, to see beyond our bourn,—
It forces us in summer skies to mourn,
It spoils the singing of the Nightingale.

Dear Reynolds! I have a mysterious tale,
And cannot speak it; the first page I read
Upon a Lampit rock of green sea-weed
Among the breakers; 'twas a quiet eve,
The rocks were silent, the wide sea did weave
An untumultuous fringe of silver foam
Along the flat brown sand; I was at home
And should have been most happy,—but I saw
Too far into the sea, where every maw
The greater on the less feeds evermore.—
But I saw too distinct into the core
Of an eternal fierce destruction,
And so from happiness I far was gone.
Still am I sick of it, and tho', to-day,
I've gather'd young spring-leaves, and flowers gay
Of periwinkle and wild strawberry,
Still do I that most fierce destruction see,—
The Shark at savage prey,—the Hawk at pounce,—
The gentle Robin, like a Pard or Ounce,
Ravening a worm,—Away, ye horrid moods!
Moods of one's mind! You know I hate them well.
You know I'd sooner be a clapping Bell
To some Kamtschatcan Missionary Church,
Than with these horrid moods be left i' the lurch.

An Invitation to Come Fishing in Wales

Charles Kingsley to Thomas Hughes, Esq.

1856.

Come away with me, Tom,
Term and talk is done;
My poor lads are reaping,
Busy every one.
Curates mind the parish,
Sweepers mind the court,
We'll away to Snowdon
For our ten days' sport,
Fish the August evening
Till the eve is past,
Whoop like boys at pounders
Fairly played and grassed.
When they cease to dimple,
Lunge and swerve, and leap,
Then up over Siabod,
Choose our nest and sleep.
Up a thousand feet, Tom,
Round the lion's head,
Find soft stones to leeward
And make up our bed.
Eat our bread and bacon,
Smoke the pipe of peace,
And, ere we be drowsy,
Give our boots a grease.
Homer's heroes did so,
Why not such as we?
What are sheets and servants?
Superfluity.
Pray for wives and children
Safe in slumber curled,

Then to chat till midnight
O'er this babbling world,
Of the workman's college,
Of the price of grain,
Of the tree of knowledge,
Of the chance of rain;
If Sir A. goes Romeward,
If Miss B. sings true,
If the fleet comes homeward,
If the mare will do,—
Anything and everything,—
Up there in the sky
Angels understand us,
And no "saints" are by.
Down, and bathe at day-dawn,
Tramp from lake to lake,
Washing brain and heart clean
Every step we take.
Leave to Robert Browning
Beggars, fleas, and vines;
Leave to squeamish Ruskin
Popish Apennines,
Dirty Stones of Venice
And his Gas-lamps Seven;
We've the Stones of Snowdon
And the lamps of heaven.
Where's the mighty credit
In admiring Alps?
Any goose sees "glory"
In their "snowy scalps."
Leave such signs and wonders
For the dullard brain,
An æsthetic brandy,
Opium and cayenne;

Give me Bramchill common
(St. John's harriers by),
Or the Vale of Windsor,
England's golden eye.
Show me life and progress,
Beauty, health, and man;
Houses fair, trim gardens,
Turn where'er I can.
Or, if bored with "High Art,"
And such popish stuff,
One's poor ear needs airing,
Snowdon's high enough.
While we find God's signet
Fresh on English ground,
Why go gallivanting
With the nations round?
Though we try no ventures
Desperate or strange;
Feed on common-places
In a narrow range;
Never sought for Franklin
Round the frozen capes:
Even with Macdougall,[1]
Bagged our brace of apes;
Never had our chance, Tom,
In that black Redan;
Can't avenge poor Brereton
Out in Sakarran;
Tho' we earn our bread, Tom,
By the dirty pen,
What we can we will be,
Honest Englishmen.
Do the work that's nearest,

[1] Bishop of Labuan.

Though it's dull at whiles,
Helping, when we meet them,
Lame dogs over stiles;
See in every hedge-row
Marks of angel's feet,
Epics in each pebble
Underneath our feet;
Once a year, like schoolboys,
Robin-Hooding go,
Leaving fops and fogies
A thousand feet below.

Winter Forenoons in the Parliament House

Robert Louis Stevenson to Charles Baxter

[Edinburgh, *October,* 1875.]

Noo lyart leaves blaw ower the green,
Red are the bonnie woods o' Dean,
An' here we're back in Embro, freen',
To pass the winter.
Whilk noo, wi' frosts afore, draws in,
An' snaws ahint her.

I've seen's hae days to fricht us a',
The Pentlands poothered weel wi' snaw,
The ways half-smoored wi' liquid thaw,
An' half-congealin',
The snell an' scowtherin' norther blaw
Frae blae Brunteelan'.

I've seen's been unco sweir to sally,
And at the door-cheeks daff and dally
Seen's daidle thus an' shilly-shally
For near a minute—

Sae cauld the wind blew up the valley,
The deil was in it!—

Syne spread the silk an' tak the gate,
In blast an' blaudin' rain, deil hae 't!
The hale toon glintin', stane an' slate,
Wi' cauld an' weet,
An' to the Court, gin we'se be late,
Bicker oor feet.

And at the Court, tae, aft I saw
Whaur Advocates by twa an' twa
Gang gesterin' end to end the ha'
In weeg an' goon,
To crack o' what ye wull but Law
The hale forenoon.

That muckle ha', maist like a kirk,
I've kent at braid mid-day sae mirk
Ye'd seen white weegs an' faces lurk
Like ghaists frae Hell,
But whether Christian ghaists or Turk
Deil ane could tell.

The three fires lunted in the gloom,
The wind blew like the blast o' doom,
The rain upo' the roof abune
Played Peter Dick—
Ye wad nae licht enough i' the room
Your teeth to pick!

But, freend, ye ken how me an' you,
The ling-lang lanely winter through,
Keep'd a guid speerit up, an' true
To lore Horatian,
We aye the ither bottle drew
To inclination.

Sae let us in the comin' days
Stand sicker on our auncient ways—
The strauchtest road in a' the maze
Since Eve ate apples;
An' let the winter weet our cla'es—
We'll weet oor thrapples.

IX

Familiar Letters

Arguments against swearing.

James Howell (1594?-1666)

Boswelliana.

Lord Macaulay (1800-1859)

Rajahs, cranks, Virgil, literary good advice, and an entirely new method of preventing men from swearing falsely.

Lord Macaulay (1800-1859)

From a distant land.

Mary Taylor (1816-1893)

Invitation to join in the founding of a Misanthropic Society.

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881)

Reading compared to sailing, and the French Revolution to a rough running sea.

Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883)

Musical biography and the meaning of music.

Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883)

A good fire, a cat and a dog on the rug, and an old woman in the kitchen.

Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883)

New Year's Eve.

Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883)

Arguments Against Swearing

James Howell to Captain Thomas B.

York, *Aug.* 1, 1628.

Noble Captain

Yours of the 1st of March was delivered me by Sir Richard Scot, and I hold it no profanation of this Sunday evening, considering the quality of my subject, and having—I thank God for it—performed all church duties, to employ some hours to meditate on you, and send you this friendly salute, though I confess in an unusual monitory way. My dear Captain, I love you perfectly well; I love both your person and parts, which are not vulgar; I am in love with your disposition, which is generous, and I verily think you were never guilty of any pusillanimous act in your life. Nor is this love of mine conferred upon you gratis, but you may challenge it as your due, and by way of correspondence, in regard of those thousand convincing evidences you have given me of yours to me, which ascertain me that you take me for a true friend. Now, I am of the number of those that had rather commend the virtue of an enemy than soothe the vices of a friend; for your own particular, if your parts of virtue and infirmities were cast into a balance, I know the first would outpoise the other; yet give me leave to tell you that there is one frailty, or rather ill-favoured custom, that reigns in you, which weighs much; it is a humour of swearing in all your discourses, and they are not slight, but deep far-fetched oaths that you are wont to rap out, which you use as flowers of rhetoric to enforce a faith upon the hearers, who believe you never the more;

and you use this in cold blood when you are not provoked, which makes the humour far more dangerous. I know many—and I cannot say I myself am free from it, God forgive me—that, being transported with choler, and as it were, made drunk with passion by some sudden provoking accident, or extreme ill-fortune at play, will let fall oaths and deep protestations; but to belch out, and send forth, as it were, whole volleys of oaths and curses in a calm humour, to verify every trivial discourse, is a thing of horror. I know a king that, being crossed in his game, would amongst his oaths fall on the ground, and bite the very earth in the rough of his passion; I heard of another king—Henry IV of France—that in his highest distemper would swear by "Ventre de Saint Gris" (By the belly of St. Gris); I heard of an Italian that, having been accustomed to blaspheme, was weaned from it by a pretty wile, for, having been one night at play, and lost all his money, after many execrable oaths, and having offered money to another to go out to face heaven and defy God, he threw himself upon a bed hard by, and there fell asleep. The other gamesters played on still, and finding that he was fast asleep, they put out the candles, and made a semblance to play on still; they fell a wrangling and spoke so loud that he awaked: he, hearing them play on still, fell a rubbing his eyes, and his conscience presently prompted him that he was struck blind, and that God's judgment had deservedly fallen down upon him for his blasphemies, and so he fell to sigh and weep pitifully. A ghostly father was sent for, who undertook to do some acts of penance for him, if he would make a vow never to play again or blaspheme, which he did; and so the candles were lighted again, which he thought were burning all the while; so he became a perfect convert. I could wish this letter might produce the same effect in you. There is a strong text,

that the curse of heaven hangs always over the dwelling of the swearer, and you have more fearful examples of miraculous judgments in this particular, than of any other sin.

There is a little town in Languedoc, in France, that hath a multitude of the pictures of the Virgin Mary up and down; but she is made to carry Christ in her right arm, contrary to the ordinary custom; and the reason they told me was this, that two gamesters being at play, and one having lost all his money, and bolted out many blasphemies, he gave a deep oath, that that jade upon the wall, meaning the picture of the blessed Virgin, was the cause of his ill-luck; hereupon the child removed imperceptibly from the left arm to the right, and the man fell stark dumb ever after; thus went the tradition there. This makes me think upon the Lady Southwell's news from Utopia, that he who sweareth when he playeth at dice, may challenge his damnation by way of purchase. This infamous custom of swearing, I observe, reigns in England lately more than anywhere else; though a German in his highest puff of passion swear a hundred thousand sacraments, the Italian by ———, the French by God's death, the Spaniard by his flesh, the Welshman by his sweat, the Irishman by his five wounds, though the Scot commonly bids the devil ha'e his soul, yet, for a variety of oaths, the English roarers put down all. Consider well what a dangerous thing it is to tear in pieces that dreadful name, which makes the vast fabric of the world to tremble, that holy name wherein the whole hierarchy of heaven doth triumph, that blissful name, wherein consists the fulness of all felicity. I know this custom in you yet is but a light disposition; 'tis no habit, I hope; let me, therefore, conjure you by that power, friendship, by that holy league of love which is between us, that you would suppress it, before it come to that; for

I must tell you that those who could find it in their hearts to love you for many other things, do disrespect you for this: they hate your company, and give no credit to whatsoever you say, it being one of the punishments of a swearer, as well as of a liar, not to be believed when he speaks truth.

Excuse me that I am so free with you; what I write proceeds from the current of a pure affection, and I shall heartily thank you, and take it for an argument of love, if you tell me of my weaknesses, which are—God wot—too, too many; for my body is but a Cargazon of corrupt humours, and being not able to overcome them all at once, I do endeavour to do it by degrees, like Sertorius his soldier, who, when he could not cut off the horse's tail at one blow with his sword, fell to pull out the hairs one by one. And touching this particular humour from which I dissuade you, it hath raged in me too often by contingent fits, but thank God for it, I find it much abated and purged. Now, the only physic I used was a precedent fast, and recourse to the holy sacrament the next day, of purpose to implore pardon for what had passed, and power for the future to quell those exorbitant motions, those ravings and feverish fits of the soul; in regard there are no infirmities more dangerous, for at the same instant they have being, they become impieties. And the greatest symptom of amendment I find in me is, because whensoever, I hear the holy name of God blasphemed by any other, it makes my heart to tremble within my breast; now, it is a penitential rule, that if sins present do not please thee, sins past will not hurt thee. All other sins have for their object either pleasure or profit, or some aim or satisfaction to body or mind, but this hath none at all; therefore fie upon't, my dear Captain; try whether you can make a conquest of yourself in subduing this execrable custom. Alexander

subdued the world, Cæsar his enemies, Hercules monsters, but he that o'ercomes himself is the true valiant captain.

Boswelliana

Lord Macaulay to Hannah and Margaret Macaulay

London: *June* 7, 1831.

Yesterday I dined at Marshall's and was almost consoled for not meeting Ramohun Roy by a very pleasant party. The great sight was the two wits, Rogers and Sydney Smith. Singly I have often seen them; but to see them both together was a novelty, and a novelty not the less curious because their mutual hostility is well known, and the hard hits which they have given to each other are in everybody's mouth. They were very civil, however. But I was struck by the truth of what Matthew Bramble, a person of whom you probably never heard, says in Smollett's Humphrey Clinker: that one wit in a company, like a knuckle of ham in soup, gives a flavour: but two are too many. Rogers and Sydney Smith would not come into conflict. If one had possession of the company, the other was silent; and, as you may conceive, the one who had possession of the company was always Sydney Smith, and the one who was silent was always Rogers. Sometimes, however, the company divided, and each of them had a small congregation. I had a good deal of talk with both of them; for, in whatever they may disagree, they agree in always treating me with very marked kindness.

I had a good deal of pleasant conversation with Rogers. He was telling me of the curiosity and interest which attached to the persons of Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron. When Sir Walter Scott dined at a gentleman's in London some time ago, all the servant-maids in the house asked leave to stand in the passage and see him pass.

He was, as you may conceive, greatly flattered. About Lord Byron, whom he knew well, he told me some curious anecdotes. When Lord Byron passed through Florence, Rogers was there. They had a good deal of conversation, and Rogers accompanied him to his carriage. The inn had fifty windows in front. All the windows were crowded with women, mostly English women, to catch a glance at their favourite poet. Among them were some at whose houses he had often been in England, and with whom he had lived on friendly terms. He would not notice them, or return their salutations. Rogers was the only person that he spoke to.

The worst thing that I know about Lord Byron is the very unfavourable impression which he made on men, who certainly were not inclined to judge him harshly, and who, as far as I know, were never personally ill-used by him. Sharp and Rogers both speak of him as an unpleasant, affected, splenetic person. I have heard hundreds and thousands of people who never saw him rant about him: but I never heard a single expression of fondness for him fall from the lips of any of those who knew him well. Yet, even now, after the lapse of five-and-twenty years, there are those who cannot talk for a quarter of an hour about Charles Fox without tears.

Sydney Smith leaves London on the 20th, the day before Parliament meets for business. I advised him to stay, and see something of his friends who would be crowding to London. "My flock!" said this good shepherd. "My dear Sir, remember my flock!

"The hungry sheep look up and are not fed."

I could say nothing to such an argument; but I could not help thinking that, if Mr. Daniel Wilson had said such a thing, it would infallibly have appeared in his funeral

sermon, and in his Life by Baptist Noel. But in poor Sydney's mouth it sounded like a joke. He begged me to come and see him at Combe Florey. "There I am, Sir, the priest of the Flowery Valley, in a delightful parsonage, about which I care a good deal, and a delightful country, about which I do not care a straw." I told him that my meeting him was some compensation for missing Ramohun Roy. Sydney broke forth: "Compensation! Do you mean to insult me? A beneficed clergyman, an orthodox clergyman, a nobleman's chaplain, to be no more than compensation for a Brahmin; and a heretic Brahmin too, a fellow who has lost his own religion and can't find another; a vile heterodox dog, who, as I am credibly informed eats beefsteaks in private! A man who has lost his caste! who ought to have melted lead poured down his nostrils, if the good old Vedas were in force as they ought to be."

These are some Boswelliana of Sydney; not very clerical, you will say, but indescribably amusing to the hearers, whatever the readers may think of them. Nothing can present a more striking contrast to his rapid, loud, laughing utterance, and his rector-like amplitude and rubicundity, than the low, slow, emphatic tone, and the corpse-like face of Rogers. There is as great a difference in what they say as in the voice and look with which they say it. The conversation of Rogers is remarkably polished and artificial. What he says seems to have been long meditated, and might be published with little correction. Sydney talks from the impulse of the moment, and his fun is quite inexhaustible.

Ever yours

T. B. M.

Rajahs, Cranks, Virgil, Literary Good Advice, and an Entirely New Method of Preventing Men from Swearing Falsely

Lord Macaulay to Thomas Flower Ellis

Ootacamund: *July* 1, 1834.

Dear Ellis,—You need not get your map to see where Ootacamund is: for it has not found its way into the maps. It is a new discovery; a place to which Europeans resort for their health, or, as it is called by the Company's servants,—blessings on their learning,—a *sanaterion*. It lies at the height of 7,000 feet above the sea.

While London is a perfect gridiron, here am I, at 13° North from the equator, by a blazing wood fire, with my windows closed. My bed is heaped with blankets, and my black servants are coughing round me in all directions. One poor fellow in particular looks so miserably cold that, unless the sun comes out, I am likely soon to see under my own roof the spectacle which, according to Shakespeare, is so interesting to the English,—a dead Indian.[1]

I travelled the whole four hundred miles between this and Madras on men's shoulders. I had an agreeable journey on the whole. I was honoured by an interview with the Rajah of Mysore, who insisted on showing me all his wardrobe, and his picture gallery. He has six or seven coloured English prints, not much inferior to those which I have seen in the sanded parlour of a country inn; "Going to Cover," "The Death of the Fox," and so forth. But the bijou of this gallery, of which he is as vain as the Grand Duke can be of the Venus, or Lord Carlisle of the Three Maries, is a head of the Duke of Wellington, which has, most certainly, been on a sign-post in England.

[1] *The Tempest*, act ii., scene 2.

Yet, after all, the Rajah was by no means the greatest fool whom I found at Mysore. I alighted at a bungalow appertaining to the British Residency. There I found an Englishman who, without any preface, accosted me thus: "Pray, Mr. Macaulay, do not you think that Buonaparte was the Beast?" "No, Sir, I cannot say that I do." "Sir, he was the Beast. I can prove it. I have found the number 666 in his name. Why, Sir, if he was not the Beast, who was?" This was a puzzling question, and I am not a little vain of my answer. "Sir," said I, "the House of Commons is the Beast. There are 658 members of the House; and these, with their chief officers,—the three clerks, the Sergeant and his deputy, the Chaplain, the door-keeper, and the librarian,—make 666." "Well, Sir, that is strange. But I can assure you that, if you write Napoleon Buonaparte in Arabic, leaving out only two letters, it will give 666." "And pray, Sir, what right have you to leave out two letters? And, as St. John was writing Greek, and to Greeks, is it not likely that he would use the Greek rather than the Arabic notation?" "But, Sir," said this learned divine, "everybody knows that the Greek letters were never used to mark numbers," I answered with the meekest look and voice possible: "I do not think that everybody knows that. Indeed I have reason to believe that a different opinion,—erroneous no doubt,—is universally embraced by all the small minority who happen to know any Greek." So ended the controversy. The man looked at me as if he thought me a very wicked fellow; and, I dare say, has by this time discovered that, if you write my name in Tamul, leaving out T in Thomas, B in Babington, and M in Macaulay, it will give the number of this unfortunate Beast.

I am very comfortable here. The Governor-General is the frankest and best-natured of men. The chief function-

aries, who have attended him hither, are clever people, but not exactly on a par as to general attainments with the society to which I belonged in London. I thought, however, even at Madras, that I could have formed a very agreeable circle of acquaintance; and I am assured that at Calcutta I shall find things far better. After all, the best rule in all parts of the world, as in London itself, is to be independent of other men's minds. My power of finding amusement without companions was pretty well tried on my voyage. I read insatiably; the Iliad and Odyssey, Virgil, Horace, Cæsar's Commentaries, Bacon de Augmentis, Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, Don Quixote, Gibbon's Rome, Mill's India, all of the seventy volumes of Voltaire, Sismondi's History of France, and the seven thick folios of the Biographia Britannica. I found my Greek and Latin in good condition enough. I liked the Iliad a little less, and the Odyssey a great deal more than formerly. Horace charmed me more than ever; Virgil not quite so much as he used to do. The want of human character, the poverty of his supernatural machinery, struck me very strongly. Can anything be so bad as the living bush which bleeds and talks, or the Harpies who befoul Æneas's dinner? It is as extravagant as Ariosto, and as dull as Wilkie's Epigoniad. The last six books, which Virgil had not fully corrected, pleased me better than the first six. I like him best on Italian ground. I like his localities; his national enthusiasm; his frequent allusions to his country, its history, its antiquities, and its greatness. In this respect he often reminded me of Sir Walter Scott, with whom, in the general character of his mind, he had very little affinity. The Georgics pleased me better; the Eclogues best,—the second and tenth above all. But I think the finest lines in the Latin language are those five which begin,

"Sepibus in nostris parvam te roscida mala—"[1]

I cannot tell you how they struck me. I was amused to find that Voltaire pronounces that passage to be the finest in Virgil.

I liked the Jerusalem better than I used to do. I was enraptured with Ariosto; and I still think of Dante, as I thought when I first read him, that he is a superior poet to Milton, that he runs neck and neck with Homer, and that none but Shakespeare has gone decidedly beyond him.

As soon as I reach Calcutta I intend to read Herodotus again. By the bye, why do not you translate him? You would do it excellently; and a translation of Herodotus, well executed, would rank with original compositions. A quarter of an hour a day would finish the work in five years. The notes might be made the most amusing in the world. I wish you would think of it. At all events, I hope you will do something which may interest more than seven or eight people. Your talents are too great, and your leisure time too small, to be wasted in inquiries so frivolous, (I must call them,) as those in which you have of late been too much engaged; whether the Cherokees are of the same race with the Chickasaws; whether Van Diemen's Land was peopled from New Holland, or New Holland from Van Diemen's Land; what is the precise mode of appointing a headman in a village in Timbuctoo. I would not give the worst page in Clarendon or Fra Paolo for all that ever was, or ever will be, written about the migrations of the Leleges and the laws of the Oscans.

I have already entered on my public functions, and I hope to do some good. The very wigs of the Judges in the Court of King's Bench would stand on end if they knew how short a chapter my Law of Evidence will form. I am not without many advisers. A native of some fortune in

[1] Eclogue viii., 37.

Madras has sent me a paper on legislation. "Your honour must know," says this judicious person, "that the great evil is that men swear falsely in this country. No judge knows what to believe. Surely if your honour can make men to swear truly, your honour's fame will be great, and the Company will flourish. Now, I know how men may be made to swear truly; and I will tell your honour for your fame, and for the profit of the Company. Let your honour cut off the great toe of the right foot of every man who swears falsely, whereby your honour's fame will be extended." Is not this an exquisite specimen of legislative wisdom?

I must stop. When I begin to write to England, my pen runs as if it would run on for ever.

Ever yours affectionately

T. B. M.

From a Distant Land

Mary Taylor[1] *to Charlotte Brontë*

I

Wellington, New Zealand,
July 24th, 1849.

Dear Charlotte,—About a month since I received and read *Jane Eyre.* It seemed to me incredible that you had actually written a book. Such events did not happen

[1] Charlotte Brontë's three most intimate girl friends were Ellen Nussey, Mary Taylor, and Lætitia Wheelwright; of these Mary Taylor was the second best—she is the "Rose Yorke" of *Shirley.* Charlotte Brontë, Ellen Nussey, and Mary Taylor first met at Roe Head School, when Charlotte and Mary were fifteen years of age. Mary Taylor, whose pet-name was "Pag," went on a long visit to Brussels; her example led the way for Charlotte and Emily Brontë to establish themselves at the Pensionnat Héger—the storm centre of *Villette.* Later she went to New Zealand, that she might earn her own living there. About 1859, or 1860, she returned to England, and lived in seclusion upon the York-

while I was in England. I begin to believe in your existence much as I do in Mr. Rochester's. In a believing mood I don't doubt either of them. After I had read it I went on to the top of Mount Victoria and looked for a ship to carry a letter to you. There was a little thing with one mast, and also H.M.S. *Fly,* and nothing else. If a cattle vessel came from Sydney she would probably return in a few days, and would take a mail, but we have had east winds for a month and nothing can come in.

Aug. 1.—The *Harlequin* has just come from Otago, and is to sail for Singapore *when the wind changes,* and by that route (which I hope to take myself sometime) I send you this. Much good may it do you. Your novel surprised me by being so perfect as a work of art. I expected something more changeable and unfinished. You have polished to some purpose. If I were to do so I should get tired, and weary every one else in about two pages. No sign of this weariness in your book—you must have had abundance, having kept it all to yourself!

You are very different from me in having no doctrine to preach. It is impossible to squeeze a moral out of your production. Has the world gone so well with you that you have no protest to make against its absurdities? Did you never sneer or declaim in your first sketches? I will scold you well when I see you. I do not believe in Mr. Rivers. There are no *good* men of the Brocklehurst species. A missionary either goes into his office for a piece of bread, or he goes from enthusiasm, and that is both too good and too bad a quality for St. John. It's a bit of your absurd charity to believe in such a man. You have done wisely in

shire moors. In 1890, when quite an old lady, she published her first and only novel—*Miss Miles*,—the purpose of which is to teach that women ought to make themselves independent of the other sex. At High Royd, Yorkshire, March, 1893, she died at the age of seventy-six.

choosing to imagine a high class of readers. You never stop to explain or defend anything, and never seem bothered with the idea. If Mrs. Fairfax or any other well-intentioned fool gets hold of this what will she think? And yet, you know, the world is made up of such, and worse. Once more, how have you written through three volumes without declaring war to the knife against a few dozen absurd doctrines, each of which is supported by "a large and respectable class of readers"? Emily seems to have had such a class in her eye when she wrote that strange thing *Wuthering Heights*. Anne, too, stops repeatedly to preach commonplace truths. She has had a still lower class in her mind's eye. Emily seems to have followed the bookseller's advice. As to the price you got, it was certainly Jewish. But what could the people do? If they had asked you to fix it, do you know yourself how many ciphers your sum would have had? And how should they know better? And if they did, that's the knowledge they get their living by. If I were in your place, the idea of being bound in the sale of two more would prevent me from ever writing again. Yet you are probably now busy with another. It is curious for me to see among the old letters one from Anne sending a *copy of a whole article* on the currency question written by Fonblanque! I exceedingly regret having burnt your letters in a fit of caution, and I've forgotten all the names. Was the reader Albert Smith? What do they all think of you?

I mention the book to no one and hear no opinions. I lend it a good deal because it's a novel, and *it's as good as another!* They say "it makes them cry." They are not literary enough to give an opinion. If ever I hear one I'll embalm it for you. As to my own affair, I have written 100 pages, and lately 50 more. It's no use writing faster. I get so disgusted, I can do nothing.

If I could command sufficient money for a twelvemonth, I would go home by way of India and write my travels, which would prepare the way for my novel. With the benefit of your experience I should perhaps make a better bargain than you. I am most afraid of my health. Not that I should die, but perhaps sink into a state of betweenity, neither well nor ill, in which I should observe nothing, and be very miserable besides. My life here is not disagreeable. I have a great resource in the piano, and a little employment in teaching.

It's a pity you don't live in this world, that I might entertain you about the price of meat. Do you know, I bought six heifers the other day for £23, and now it is turned so cold I expect to hear one-half of them are dead. One man bought twenty sheep for £8, and they are all dead but one. Another bought 150 and has 40 left.

I have now told you everything I can think of except that the cat's on the table and that I'm going to borrow a new book to read—no less than an account of all the systems of philosophy of modern Europe. I have lately met with a wonder, a man who thinks Jane Eyre would have done better to marry Mr. Rivers! He gives no reason—such people never do.

MARY TAYLOR.

II

Wellington, New Zealand.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,—I have set up shop; I am delighted with it as a whole—that is, it is as pleasant or as little disagreeable as you can expect an employment to be that you earn your living by. The best of it is that your labour has some return, and you are not forced to work on hopelessly without result. *Du reste,* it is very odd. I keep looking at myself with one eye while I'm using the other, and I sometimes find myself in very queer positions. Yesterday I

went along the shore past the wharfes and several warehouses on a street where I had never been before during all the five years I have been in Wellington. I opened the door of a long place filled with packages, with passages up the middle, and a row of high windows on one side. At the far end of the room a man was writing at a desk beneath a window. I walked all the length of the room very slowly, for what I had come for had completely gone out of my head. Fortunately the man never heard me until I had recollected it. Then he got up, and I asked him for some stone-blue, saltpetre, tea, pickles, salt, etc. He was very civil. I bought some things and asked for a note of them. He went to his desk again; I looked at some newspapers lying near. On the top was a circular from Smith & Elder, containing notices of the most important new works. The first and longest was given to *Shirley,* a book I had seen mentioned in the *Manchester Examiner* as written by Currer Bell.[1] I blushed all over. The man got up, folding the note. I pulled it out of his hand and set off to the door, looking odder than ever, for a partner had come in and was watching. The clerk said something about sending them, and I said something too—I hope it was not very silly—and took my departure.

I have seen some extracts from *Shirley* in which you talk of women working. And this first duty, this great necessity, you seem to think that some women may indulge in, if they give up marriage, and don't make themselves too disagreeable to the other sex. You are a coward and a traitor. A woman who works is by that alone better than one who does not; and a woman who does not happen to be rich and who *still* earns no money and does not wish to do so, is guilty of a great fault, almost a crime—a dereliction of duty which leads rapidly and almost certainly to all man-

[1] Charlotte Brontë's *nom de plume.*

ner of degradation. It is very wrong of you to *plead* for toleration for workers on the ground of their being in peculiar circumstances, and few in number or singular in disposition. Work or degradation is the lot of all except the very small number born to wealth.

III

Wellington, N. Z., *April 3rd*, 1850.

Dear Charlotte,—About a week since I received your last melancholy letter with the account of Anne's death[1] and your utter indifference to everything, even to the success of your last book. Though you do not say this, it is pretty plain to be seen from the style of your letter. It seems to me hard indeed that you who would succeed, better than any one, in making friends and keeping them, should be condemned to solitude from your poverty. To no one would money bring more happiness, for no one would use it better than you would. For me, with my headlong self-indulgent habits, I am perhaps better without it, but I am convinced it would give you great and noble pleasures. Look out then for success in writing; you ought to care as much for that as you do for going to Heaven. Though the advantages of being employed appear to you now the best part of the business, you will soon, please God, have other enjoyments from your success. Railway shares will rise, your books will sell, and you will acquire influence and power; and then most certainly you will find something to use it in which will interest you and make you exert yourself.

IV

Wellington, N. Z.

Dear Charlotte,—I began a letter to you one bitter cold evening last week, but it turned out such a sad one

[1] Anne Brontë.

that I have left it and begun again. I am sitting all alone in my own house, or rather what is to be mine when I've paid for it. I bought it of Henry when Ellen[1] died—shop and all, and carry it on by myself. I have made up my mind not to get any assistance. I have not too much work, and the annoyance of having an unsuitable companion was too great to put up with without necessity. I find now that it was Ellen that made me so busy, and without her to nurse I have plenty of time. I have begun to keep the house very tidy; it makes it less desolate. I take great interest in my trade—as much as I could do in anything that was not *all* pleasure. But the best part of my life is the excitement of arrivals from England. Reading all the news, written and printed, is like living another life quite separate from this one. The old letters are strange—very, when I begin to read them, but quite familiar notwithstanding. So are all the books and newspapers, though I never see a human being to whom it would ever occur to me to mention anything I read in them. I see your *nom de guerre* in them sometimes. I saw a criticism on the preface to the second edition of *Wuthering Heights.* I saw it among the notables who attended Thackeray's lectures. I have seen it somehow connected with Sir J. K. Shuttleworth. Did he want to marry you, or only to lionise you? *or was it somebody else?*

Your life in London is a "new country" to me, which I cannot even picture to myself. You seem to like it—at least some things in it, and yet your late letters to Mrs. J. Taylor talk of low spirits and illness. "What's the matter with you now?" as my mother used to say, as if it were the twentieth time in a fortnight. It is really melancholy that now, in the prime of life, in the flush of your hard-earned

[1] Ellen Taylor, cousin to Mary Taylor, who had joined her in the enterprise of keeping shop and had recently died.

prosperity, you can't be well. Did not Miss Martineau improve you? If she did, why not try her and her plan again? But I suppose if you had hope and energy to try, you would be well. Well, it's nearly dark and you will surely be well when you read this, so what's the use of writing? I should like well to have some details of your life, but how can I hope for it? I have often tried to give you a picture of mine, but I have not the skill. I get a heap of details, mostly paltry in themselves, and not enough to give you an idea of the whole. Oh, for one hour's talk! You are getting too far off and beginning to look strange to me. Do you look as you used to do, I wonder? What do you and Ellen Nussey talk about when you meet? There! it's dark.

Invitation to Join in the Founding of the Misanthropic Society

Thomas Carlyle[1] *to Thomas De Quincey*

Craigenputtoch, 11*th December,* 1828.

My Dear Sir,

Having the opportunity of a frank, I cannot resist the temptation to send you a few lines, were it only to signify that two well-wishers of yours are still alive in these remote moors, and often thinking of you with the old friendly feelings. My wife encourages me in this innocent purpose: she has learned lately that you were inquiring for her of some female friend; nay, even promising to visit us here—a fact of the most interesting sort to both of us. I am to say, therefore, that your presence at this fireside will diffuse no ordinary gladness over all members of the house-

[1] James Smetham, in one of his letters, speaks finely of Carlyle as, "The great Gothic whale lumbering and floundering in the Northern Seas, and spouting his 'foam fountains' under the crackling Aurora and the piercing Hyperborean stars."

hold; that our warmest welcome, and such solacements, as even the desert does not refuse, are at any time, and at all times in store for one we love so well. Neither is this expedition so impracticable. We lie but a short way out of your direct route to Westmoreland; communicate by gravelled roads with Dumfries and other places in the habitable globe. Were you to warn us of your approach, it might all be made easy enough. And then such a treat it would be to hear the sound of philosophy and literature in the hitherto quite savage wolds, where since the creation of the world no such music, scarcely even articulate speech, had been uttered or dreamed of! Come, therefore, come and see us; for we often long after you. Nay, I can promise too, that we are almost a unique sight in the British Empire; such a quantity of German periodicals and mystic speculation embosomed in plain Scottish Peat-moor being nowhere else that I know of to be met with.

In idle hours we sometimes project founding a sort of colony here, to be called the "Misanthropic Society," the settlers all to be men of a certain philosophic depth, and intensely sensible of the present state of literature; each to have his own cottage, encircled with roses or thistles as he might prefer; a library and pantry within, and huge stack of turf-fuel without; fenced off from his neighbours by fir woods, and, when he pleased, by cast-metal railings, so that each might feel himself strictly as an individual, and free as a son of the wilderness; but the whole settlement to meet weekly over coffee, and there unite in their *Miserere,* or what were better, hurl forth their defiance, pity, expostulation, over the whole universe, civil, literary, and religious. I reckon this place a much fitter site for such an establishment than your Lake Country—a region abounding in natural beauty, but blown on by coach-horns, betrodden by picturesque tourists, and other-

wise exceedingly desecrated by too frequent resort; whereas here, though still in communication with the manufacturing world, we have a solitude altogether Druidical—grim hills tenanted chiefly by the wild grouse, tarns and brooks that have soaked and slumbered unmolested since the Deluge of Noah, and nothing to disturb you with speech, except Arcturus and Orion, and the Spirit of Nature, in the heaven and in the earth, as it manifests itself in anger or love, and utters its inexplicable tidings, unheard by mortal ear. Would *you* come hither and be king over us; *then* indeed we had made a fair beginning, and the "Bog School" might snap its fingers at the "Lake School" itself, and hope to be one day recognised of all men.

But enough of this fooling. Better were it to tell you in plain prose what little can be said of my own welfare, and inquire in the same dialect after yours. It will gratify you to learn that here, in the desert, as in the crowded city, I am moderately active and well; better in health, not worse; and though active only on the small scale, yet in my own opinion honestly, and to as much result as has been usual with me at any time. We have horses to ride on, gardens to cultivate, tight walls and strong fires to defend us against winter; books to read, paper to scribble on; and no man or thing, at least in this visible earth, to make us afraid; for I reckon that so securely sequestered are we, not only would no Catholic Rebellion, but even no new Hengist and Horsa invasion, in anywise disturb our tranquillity. True, we have no society; but who has, in the strict sense of that word? I have never had any worth speaking much about since I came into this world: in the next, it may be, they will order matters better. Meanwhile, if we have not the *wheat* in great quantity, we are nearly altogether free from the *chaff*, which often in this matter is highly annoying to weak nerves. My wife and I are

busy learning Spanish; far advanced in *Don Quixote* already. I purpose writing mystical *Reviews* for somewhat more than a twelvemonth to come; have Greek to read, and the whole universe to study (for I understand less and less of it); so that here as well as elsewhere I find that a man may "*dree his weird*" (serve out his earthly apprenticeship) with reasonable composure, and wait what the flight of years may bring him, little disappointed (unless he is a fool) if it brings him mere *nothing* save what he has already—a body and soul—more cunning and costly treasures than all Golconda and Potosi could purchase for him. What would the vain worm, man, be at? Has he not a head, to speak of nothing else—a head (be it *with* a hat or without one) full of far richer things than Windsor Palace, or the Brighton Teapot added to it? What are all Dresden picture-galleries and magazines *des arts et des métiers* to the strange paintings and thrice wonderful and thrice precious workmanship that goes on under the cranium of a beggar? What *can* be added to him or taken from him by the hatred or love of all men? The grey paper or the white silk paper in which the gold ingot is wrapped; the gold is inalienable; *he* is the gold. But truce to this moralising. I had a thousand things to ask concerning you: your employments, purposes, sufferings, and pleasures. Will you not write to me? Will you not come to me and tell? Believe it, you are well loved here, and none feels better than I what a spirit is for the present eclipsed in clouds. For the present it can only be; time and chance are for all men; that troublous season will end; and one day with more joyful, not deeper truer regard, I shall see you "yourself again." Meanwhile, pardon me this intrusion; and write, if you have a vacant hour which you would fill with a good action. Mr. Jeffrey is still anxious to know you; has he ever succeeded? We are not to be in

Edinburgh, I believe, till spring; but I will send him a letter to you (with your permission) by the first conveyance. Remember me with best regards to Professor Wilson and Sir W. Hamilton, neither of whom must forget me; not omitting the honest Gordon, who I know will not.

The bearer of this letter is Henry Inglis, a young gentleman of no ordinary talent and worth, in whom, as I believe, *es steckt gar viel.* Should he call himself, pray let this be an introduction, for he reverences all spiritual worth, and you also will learn to love him.—With all friendly sentiments, I am ever, my dear Sir, most faithfully yours,

T. Carlyle.

Reading Compared to Sailing, and the French Revolution to a Rough Running Sea

Edward FitzGerald to Bernard Barton[1]

London, *April,* 1838.

Dear Sir,

John, who is going down into Suffolk, will I hope take this letter and despatch it to you properly. I write more on account of this opportunity than of anything I have to say: for I am very heavy indeed with a kind of Influenza, which has blocked up most of my senses, and put a wet blanket over my brains. This state of head has not been improved by trying to get through a new book much in fashion—Carlyle's French Revolution—written in a German style. An Englishman writes of French Revolutions in a German style. People say the book is very deep: but it appears to me that the meaning *seems* deep from lying under mystical language. There is no repose, nor equable movement in it: all cut up into short sentences half reflect-

[1] The Quaker poet and friend of Charles Lamb, who lived at Woodbridge, whose daughter FitzGerald subsequently married.

ive, half narrative; so that one labours through it as vessels do through what is called a short sea—small, contrary going waves caused by shallows, and straits, and meeting tides, etc.; I like to sail before the wind over the surface of an even-rolling eloquence, like that of Bacon or the Opium Eater. There is also pleasant fresh water sailing with such writers as Addison; is there any pond-sailing in literature? that is, drowsy, slow, and of small compass? Perhaps we may say, some Sermons. But this is only conjecture. Certainly Jeremy Taylor rolls along as majestically as any of them. We have had Alfred Tennyson here; very droll, and very wayward: and much sitting up of nights till two and three in the morning with pipes in our mouths: at which good hour we would get Alfred to give us some of his magic music, which he does between growling and smoking; and so to bed. All this has not cured my Influenza, as you may imagine: but these hours shall be remembered long after the Influenza is forgotten.

Musical Biography and the Meaning of Music

Edward FitzGerald to F. Tennyson

31 *March,* 1842.

Dear Frederic,

I don't understand your theory about trumpets, which have always been so little spiritual *in use,* that they have been the provocatives and celebrators of physical force from the beginning of the world. "*Power,*" whether spiritual or physical, is the meaning of the trumpet: and so, well used, as you say, by Handel in his approaches to the Deity. The fugue in the overture to the Messiah expresses perhaps the thorny wandering ways of the world before the voice of one in the wilderness, and before "Comfort ye my

people, etc." Mozart, I agree with you, is the most universal musical genius: Beethoven has been too analytical and erudite: but his inspiration is nevertheless true. I have just read his Life by Moscheles: well worth reading. He shewed no very decided preference for music when a child, though he was the son of a composer: and I think that he was, strictly speaking, more of a thinker than a musician. A great genius he was somehow. He was very fond of reading: Plutarch and Shakespeare his great favourites. He tried to think in music: almost to reason in music: whereas perhaps we should be contented with feeling in it. It can never speak very definitely. There is that famous "Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, etc.," in Handel: nothing can sound more simple and devotional: but it is only adapted to these words, being originally (I believe) a love song in Rodelinda. Well, lovers adore their mistresses more than their God. Then the famous music of "He layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters, etc.," was originally fitted to an Italian pastoral song—"Nasce al bosco in rozza cuna, un felice pastorello, etc." That part which seems so well to describe "and walketh on the wings of the wind" falls happily in with "e con l'aura di fortuna" with which this pastorello sailed along. The character of the music is ease and largeness: as the shepherd lived, so God Almighty walked on the wind. The music breathes ease: but words must tell us who takes it easy. Beethoven's Sonata—Op. 14—is meant to express the discord and gradual atonement of two lovers, or a man and his wife: and he was disgusted that everyone did not see what was meant: in truth it expresses any resistance gradually overcome—Dobson shaving with a blunt razor, for instance. Music is so far the most universal language, that any one piece in a particular strain symbolizes all the analogous phenomena spiritual or material if you can

talk of spiritual phenomena. The Eroica symphony describes the battle of the passions as well as of armed men. This is a long and muddy discourse: but the walls of Charlotte Street present little else, especially during this last week of Lent, to twaddle about.

A Good Fire, a Cat and a Dog on the Rug, and an Old Woman in the Kitchen

Edward FitzGerald to F. Tennyson

Boulge, Woodbridge, *Dec.* 8, '44.

My Dear Frederic,

What is a poor devil to do? You tell me quite truly that my letters have not two ideas in them, and yet you tell me to write my two ideas as soon as I can. So indeed it is so far easy to write down one's two ideas, if they are not very abstruse ones; but then what the devil encouragement is it to a poor fellow to expose his nakedness so? All I can say is, to say again that if you lived in this place, you would not write so long a letter as you have done, full of capital description and all good things; though without any compliment I am sure you would write a better letter than I shall. But you see the original fault in me is that I choose to be in such a place as this at all; that argues a talent for dullness which no situation nor intercourse of men could much improve. It is true; I really do like to sit in this doleful place with a good fire, a cat and a dog on the rug, and an old woman in the kitchen. This is all my live stock. The house is yet damp as last year; and the great event of this winter is my putting up a trough round the eaves to carry off the wet. There was discussion whether the trough should be of iron or zinc: iron dear and lasting: zinc the reverse. It was decided for iron: and accordingly iron is put up.

Why should I not live in London and see the world? you say. Why then *I* say as before, I don't like it. I think the dullness of country people is better than the impudence of Londoners; and the fresh cold and wet of our clay fields better than a fog that stinks *per se;* and this room of mine, clean at all events, better than a dirty room in Charlotte St. If you, Morton, and Alfred,[1] were more in London, I should be there more; but now there is but Spedding and Allen whom I care a straw about. I have written two notes to Alfred to ask him to notify his existence to me; but you know he is obstinate on that point. I heard from Carlyle that he (Alfred) had passed an evening at Chelsea much to C.'s delight; who has opened the gates of his Valhalla to let Alfred in. Thackeray is at Malta, where I am told he means to winter. . . .

As I have no people to tell you of, so have I very few books, and know nothing of what is stirring in the literary world. I have read the Life of Arnold of Rugby, who was a noble fellow; and the letters of Burke, which do not add to, or detract from, what I knew, and liked in him before. I am meditating to begin Thucydides one day; perhaps this winter. . . .

Old Seneca, I have no doubt, was a great humbug in deed, and his books have plenty of it in word; but he had got together a vast deal of what was not humbug from others; and, as far as I see, the old philosophers are available now as much as two thousand years back. Perhaps you will think that is not saying much. Don't suppose I think it good philosophy in myself to keep here out of the world, and sport a gentle Epicurism; I do not; I only follow something of a natural inclination, and know not if I could do better under a more complex system. It is very smooth sailing hitherto down here. No velvet waistcoat

[1] Lord Tennyson.

and ever-lustrous pumps to be considered; no bon mots got up; no information necessary. There is a pipe for the parsons to smoke, and quite as much bon mots, literature, and philosophy, as they care for without any trouble at all. If we could but feed our poor! It is now the 8th of December; it has blown a most desperate East wind, all razors; a wind like one of those blades one sees at shops in London, with 365 blades all drawn and pointed; the wheat is sown; the fallows cannot be ploughed. What are all the poor folks to do during the winter? And they persist in having the same enormous families they used to do; a woman came to me two days ago who had seventeen children! What farmers are to employ all these? What Landlord can find room for them? The law of Generation must be repealed. The London press does nothing but rail at us poor country folks for our cruelty. I am glad they do so; for there is much to be set right. But I want to know if the Editor of the Times is more attentive to his devils, their wives and families, than our squires and squiresses and parsons are to their fellow parishioners. Punch also assumes a tone of virtuous satire, from the mouth of Mr. Douglas Jerrold! It is easy to sit in arm chairs at a club in Pall Mall and rail on the stupidity and brutality of those in High Suffolk.

Come, I have got more than two ideas into this sheet; but I don't know if you won't dislike them worse than mere nothing. But I was determined to fill my letter. Yes, you are to know that I slept at Woodbridge last night, went to Church there this morning, where every one sat with a purple nose, and heard a dismal well-meant sermon; and the organ blew us out with one grand idea at all events, one of old Handel's Coronation Anthems; that I dined early, also in Woodbridge; and walked up here with a tremendous East wind blowing sleet in my face from over the

German Sea, that I found your letter when I entered my room; and reading it through, determined to spin you off a sheet incontinently, and lo! here it is! Now or never! I shall now have my tea in, and read over your letter again while at it. You are quite right in saying that Gravesend excursions with you do me good. When did I doubt it? I remember them with great pleasure; few of my travels so much so. I like a short journey in good company; and I like you all the better for your Englishman's humours. One doesn't find such things in London; something more like it here in the country where every one, with whatever natural stock of intellect endowed, at least grows up his own way, and flings his branches about him, not stretched on the espalier of London dinner-table company.

P. S. Next morning. Snow is on the ground. We have our wonders of inundation in Suffolk also, I can tell you. For three weeks ago such floods came, that an old woman was carried off as she was retiring from a beer house about 9 p. m., and drowned. She was probably half seas over before she left the beer house.

And three nights ago I looked out at about ten o'clock at night, before going to bed. It seemed perfectly still; frosty, and the stars shining bright. I heard a continuous moaning sound, which I knew to be, not that of an infant exposed, or female ravished, but the sea, more than ten miles off! What little wind there was carried to us the murmurs of the waves circulating round these coasts so far over a flat country. But people here think that this sound so heard is not the waves that break, but a kind of prophetic voice from the body of the sea itself, announcing great gales. Sure enough we have got them, however heralded. Now I say that all this shows that we in this Suffolk are not so completely given over to prose and turnips as some would have us. I always said that being near the sea, and

being able to catch a glimpse of it from the tops of hills, and of houses, redeemed Suffolk from dullness; and at all events our turnip fields, dull in themselves, were at least set all round with an undeniably poetic element. And so I see Arnold says; he enumerates five inland counties as the only parts of England for which nothing could be said in praise. Not that I agree with him there neither; I cannot allow the valley of the Ouse about which some of my pleasantest recollections hang to be without its great charm. W. Browne, whom you despised, is married, and I shall see but little of him for the future. I have laid by my rod and line by the willows of the Ouse for ever. "He is married and cannot come." This change is the true meaning of those verses,

> "Friend after friend departs;
> Who has not lost a friend?"

and so on. If I were conscious of being steadfast and good humoured enough, I would marry to-morrow. But a humourist is best by himself.

New Year's Eve

Edward FitzGerald to F. Tennyson

[Boulge] *Decr.* 31, '50.

My dear old Frederic,

If you knew how glad I am to hear from you, you would write to me oftener. You see I make a quick return whenever I get an epistle from you. I should indeed have begun to indite before, but I had not a scrap of serviceable paper in the house: and I am only this minute returned from a wet walk to Woodbridge bringing home the sheet on which I am now writing, along with the rest of a half-quire, which may be filled to you, if we both live. I now

count the number of sheets: there are nine. I do not think we average more than three letters a year each. Shall both of us, or either, live three years more, beginning with the year that opens to-morrow? I somehow believe *not:* which I say not as a doleful thing (indeed you may look at it as a very ludicrous one). Well, we shall see. I am all for the short and merry life. Last night I began the sixth Book of Lucretius in bed. You laugh grimly again? I have not looked into it for more than a year, and I took it up by mistake for one of Swift's dirty volumes; and, having got into bed with it, did not care to get out to change it. . . .

I have not seen any one you know since I last wrote; nor heard from any one: except dear old Spedding, who really came down and spent two days with us, me and that Scholar[1] and his Wife in their Village, in their delightful little house, in their pleasant fields by the River side. Old Spedding was delicious there; always leaving a mark, I say, in all places one has been at with him, a sort of Platonic perfume. For has he not all the beauty of the Platonic Socrates, with some personal Beauty to boot? He explained to us one day about the laws of reflection in water: and I said then one never could look at the willow whose branches furnished the text without thinking of him. How beastly this reads! As if he gave us a lecture! But you know the man, how quietly it all came out; only because I petulantly denied his plain assertion. For I really often cross him only to draw him out; and vain as I may be, he is one of those that I am well content to make shine at my own expense.

Don't suppose that this or any other ideal day with him effaces my days with you. Indeed, my dear Frederic, you

[1] The Rev. George Crabbe, son of the poet, and Vicar of Bredfield.

also mark many times and many places in which I have been with you. Gravesend and its ἀνήριθμοι shrimps cannot be forgotten. You say I shall never go to see you at Florence. I have said to you before and I now repeat it, that if ever I go abroad it shall be to see you and my God-child. I really cannot say if I should not have gone this winter (as I hinted in my last) in case you had answered my letter. But I really did not know if you had not left Florence; and a fortnight ago I thought to myself I would write to Horatio at Cheltenham and ask him for news of you. As to Alfred, I have heard of his marriage, etc., from Spedding, who also saw and was much pleased with her indeed. But you know Alfred himself never writes, nor indeed cares a halfpenny about one, though he is very well satisfied to see one when one falls in his way. You will think I have a spite against him for some neglect, when I say this, and say besides that I cannot care for his In Memoriam. Not so, if I know myself: I always thought the same of him, and was just as well satisfied with it as now. His poem I never did greatly affect: nor can I learn to do so: it is full of finest things, but it is monotonous, and has the air of being evolved by a Poetical Machine of the highest order. So it seems to be with him now, at least to me, the Impetus, the lyrical œstrus, is gone. . . . It is the cursed inactivity (very pleasant to me who am no Hero) of this 19th century which has spoiled Alfred, I mean spoiled him for the great work he ought now to be entering upon; the lovely and noble things he has done must remain. It is dangerous work this prophesying about great Men.

. . . . . .

I hear little music but what I make myself or help to make with the Parson's son and daughter. We, with not a voice among us, go through Handel's Coronation An-

thems! Laughable it may seem; yet it is not quite so; the things are so well-defined, simple, and grand, that the faintest outline of them tells; my admiration of the old Giant grows and grows: his is the Music for a Great, Active People. Sometimes too, I go over to a place elegantly called *Bungay,* where a Printer lives who drills the young folks of a manufactory there to sing in Chorus once a week. . . . They sing some of the English Madrigals, some of Purcell, and some of Handel, in a way to satisfy me, who don't want perfection, and who believe that the *grandest* things do not depend on delicate finish. If you were here now, we would go over and hear the Harmonious Blacksmith sung in Chorus, with words, of course. It almost made me cry when I heard the divine Air rolled into vocal harmony from the four corners of a large Hall. One can scarce comprehend the Beauty of the English Madrigals till one hears them done (though coarsely) in this way and on a large scale: the play of the parts as they alternate from the different quarters of the room.

I have taken another half sheet to finish my letter upon: so my calculation of how far this half-quire is to spread over Time is defeated. Let us write oftener, and longer, and we shall not tempt the Fates by inchoating too long a hope of letter-paper. I have written enough for one night: I am now going to sit down and play one of Handel's Overtures as well as I can—Semele, perhaps, a very grand one —then, lighting my lantern, trudge through the mud to Parson Crabbe's. Before I take my pen again to finish this letter the New Year will have dawned—on some of us. "Thou fool! this night thy soul may be required of thee"! Very well: while it is in this Body I will wish my dear old F. T. a happy New Year. And now to drum out the Old with Handel. Good Night.

New Year's Day 1851. A happy new Year to you! I

sat up with my Parson till the Old Year was past, drinking punch and smoking cigars, for which I endure some headache this morning. Not that we took much; but a very little punch disagrees with me. Only I would not disappoint my old friend's convivial expectations. He is one of those happy men who has the boy's heart throbbing and trembling under the snows of sixty-five.

X

Oddities

Calculating how much he has eaten and drunk.

Sydney Smith (1771-1845)

Unflattering remarks about Australia.

Charles Lamb (1775-1835)

A real life tragedy.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

Wherein a certain gentleman dies of a most unnatural disease.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

Boswell brought back to life.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

Calculating How Much He Has Eaten and Drunk

Sydney Smith to Lord Murray

Combe Florey, *September* 29, 1843.

You are, I hear, attending more to diet than heretofore. If you wish for anything like happiness in the fifth act of life, eat and drink about one half what you could eat and drink. Did I ever tell you my calculation about eating and drinking? Having ascertained the weight of what I could live upon, so as to preserve health and strength, and what I did live upon, I found that, between ten and seventy years of age, I had eaten and drunk forty-four horse wagon loads of meat and drink more than would have preserved me in life and health! The value of this mass of nourishment I considered to be worth seven thousand pounds sterling. It occurred to me that I must, by my voracity, have starved to death fully a hundred persons. This is a frightful calculation, but irresistibly true; and I think, dear Murray, your wagons require an additional horse each!

Unflattering Remarks about Australia

Charles Lamb to Barron Field

August 31, 1817.

My dear Barron,—The bearer of this letter so far across the seas is Mr. Lawrey, who comes out to you as a missionary, and whom I have been strongly importuned to recommend to you as a most worthy creature by Mr. Fenwick, a very old, honest friend of mine, of whom, if my

memory does not deceive me, you have had some knowledge heretofore as editor of the *Statesman*—a man of talent, and patriotic. If you can show him any facilities in his arduous undertaking, you will oblige us much. Well, and how does the land of thieves use you? and how do you pass your time in your extra-judicial intervals? Going about the streets with a lantern, like Diogenes, looking for an honest man? You may look long enough, I fancy. Do give me some notion of the manners of the inhabitants where you are. They don't thieve all day long, do they? No human property could stand such continuous battery. And what do they do when they an't stealing?

Have you got a theatre? What pieces are performed? Shakespear's, I suppose—not so much for the poetry, as for his having once been in danger of leaving his country on account of certain "small deer."

Have you poets among you? Cursed plagiarists, I fancy, if you have any. I would not trust an idea or a pocket-handkerchief of mine among 'em. You are almost competent to answer Lord Bacon's problem, whether a nation of atheists can subsist together. You are practically in one:—

> "So thievish 'tis, that the eighth commandment itself
> Scarce seemeth there to be."

A Real Life Tragedy

Charles Dickens to Maclise

Friday evening, March 12th, 1841.

You will be greatly shocked and grieved to hear that the Raven is no more. He expired to-day at a few minutes after twelve o'clock at noon. He had been ailing for a few days, but we anticipated no serious result, conjecturing

that a portion of the white paint he swallowed last summer might be lingering about his vitals without having any serious effect upon his constitution. Yesterday afternoon he was taken so much worse that I sent an express for the medical gentleman (Mr. Herring) who promptly attended and administered a powerful dose of castor oil. Under the influence of this medicine he recovered so fast as to be able at eight o'clock p. m. to bite Topping. His night was peaceful. This morning at daybreak he appeared better; received (agreeably to the doctor's directions) another dose of castor oil; and partook plentifully of some warm gruel, the flavour of which he appeared to relish. Towards eleven o'clock he was so much worse that it was found necessary to muffle the stable knocker. At half-past, or thereabouts, he was heard talking to himself about the horse and Topping's family, and to add some incoherent expressions which are supposed to have been either a foreboding of his approaching dissolution, or some wishes relative to the disposal of his little property: consisting chiefly of half-pence which he had buried in different parts of the garden. On the clock striking twelve he appeared slightly agitated, but he soon recovered, walking twice or thrice along the coach-house, stopped to bark, staggered, exclaimed *"Halloa, old girl!"* (his favourite expression), and died.

He behaved throughout with decent fortitude, equanimity, and self-possession, which cannot be too much admired. I deeply regret that being in ignorance of his danger I did not attend to receive his last instructions. Something remarkable about his eyes occasioned Topping to run for the doctor at twelve. When they returned together our friend was gone. It was the medical gentleman who informed me of his decease. He did it with great caution and delicacy, preparing me by the remark that "a jolly queer start had taken place;" but the shock was very great notwithstand-

ing. I am not wholly free from suspicion of poison. A malicious butcher has been heard to say that he would "do" for him: his plea was that he would not be molested in taking orders down the mews by any bird that wore a tail. Other persons have also been heard to threaten: among others, Charles Knight, who has just started a weekly publication price fourpence: *Barnaby* being, as you know, threepence. I have directed a post-mortem examination, and the body has been removed to Mr. Herring's school of anatomy for that purpose.

I could wish, if you can take the trouble, that you could inclose this to Forster, immediately after you have read it. I cannot discharge the painful task of communication more than once. Were they ravens who took manna to somebody in the wilderness? At times I hope they were, and at others I fear they were not, or they would certainly have stolen it by the way. In profound sorrow, I am ever your bereaved friend C. D. Kate is as well as can be expected, but terribly low as you may suppose. The children seem rather glad of it. He bit their ankles. But that was play.

Wherein a Certain Gentleman Dies of a Most Unnatural Disease

Charles Dickens to Mr. Felton

Broadstairs, Kent, *September* 1, 1843.

My dear Felton,—If I thought it in the nature of things that you and I could ever agree on paper, touching a certain Chuzzlewitian question whereupon Forster tells me you have remarks to make, I should immediately walk into the same, tooth and nail. But as I don't, I won't. Contenting myself with the prediction, that one of these years and days, you will write or say to me: "My dear Dickens, you were right, though rough, and did a world of

good, though you got most thoroughly hated for it." To which I shall reply: "My dear Felton, I looked a long way off and not immediately under my nose." . . . At which sentiment you will laugh, and I shall laugh; and then (for I foresee this will all happen in my land) we shall call for another pot of porter and two or three dozens of oysters.

Now, don't you in your own heart and soul quarrel with me for this long silence?

Not half so much as I quarrel with myself, I know; but if you could read half the letters I write to you in imagination, you would swear by me for the best of correspondents. The truth is, that when I have done my morning's work, down goes my pen, and from that minute I feel it a positive impossibility to take it up again, until imaginary butchers and bakers wave me to my desk. I walk about brimful of letters, facetious descriptions, touching morsels, and pathetic friendships, but can't for the soul of me uncork myself. The post-office is my rock ahead. My average number of letters that *must* be written every day is, at the least, a dozen. And you could no more know what I was writing to you spiritually, from the perusal of the bodily thirteenth, than you could tell from my hat what was going on in my head, or could hear my heart on the surface of my flannel waistcoat.

This is a little fishing place; intensely quiet; built on a cliff, whereon—in the centre of a tiny semi-circular bay—our house stands; the sea rolling and dashing under the windows. Seven miles out are the Goodwin Sands (you've heard of the Goodwin Sands?) whence floating lights perpetually wink after dark, as if they were carrying on intrigues with the servants. Also there is a big lighthouse called the North Foreland on a hill behind the village, a severe parsonic light, which reproves the young and giddy

floaters, and stares grimly out upon the sea. Under the cliff are rare good sands, where all the children assemble every morning and throw up impossible fortifications, which the sea throws down again at high water. Old gentlemen and ancient ladies flirt after their own manner in two reading-rooms and on a great many scattered seats in the open air.

Other old gentlemen look all day through telescopes and never see anything. In a bay-window in a one-pair sits, from nine o'clock to one, a gentleman with rather long hair and no neck-cloth, who writes and grins as if he thought he were very funny indeed. His name is Boz. At one he disappears, and presently emerges from a bathing-machine, and may be seen—a kind of salmon-coloured porpoise—splashing about in the ocean. After that he may be seen in another bay-window on the ground floor, eating a strong lunch; after that, walking a dozen miles or so, or lying on his back in the sand reading a book. Nobody bothers him unless they know he is disposed to be talked to; and I am told he is very comfortable indeed. He's as brown as a berry, and they *do* say is a small fortune to the innkeeper who sells beer and cold punch. But this is mere rumour. Sometimes he goes up to London (eighty miles, or so, away), and then I'm told there is a sound in Lincoln's Inn Fields at night, as men laughing, together with a clinking of knives and forks and wine glasses. . . .

I often dream that I am in America again; but, strange to say, I never dream of you. I am always endeavouring to get home in disguise, and have a dreary sense of distance. *À propos* of dreams, is it not a strange thing if writers of fiction never dream of their own creations; recollecting, I suppose, even in their dreams, that they have no real existence? I never dream of any of my own characters, and I feel it so impossible that I would wager Scott never

did of his, real as they are. I had a good piece of absurdity in my head a night or two ago. I dreamed that somebody was dead. I don't know who, but it's not to the purpose. It was a private gentleman, or a particular friend; and I was greatly overcome when the news was broken to me (very delicately) by a gentleman in a cocked hat, top boots, and a sheet. Nothing else. "Good God!" I said, "is he dead?" "He is as dead, sir," rejoined the gentleman, "as a door-nail. But we must all die, Mr. Dickens, sooner or later, my dear sir." "Ah!" I said, "Yes, to be sure. Very true. But what did he die of?" The gentleman burst into a flood of tears, and said in a voice broken by emotion: "He christened his youngest child, Sir, with a toasting fork." I never in my life was so affected as at his having fallen a victim to this complaint. It carried a conviction to my mind that he never could have recovered. I knew that it was the most interesting and fatal malady in the world; and I wrung the gentleman's hand in a convulsion of respectful admiration, for I felt that this explanation did equal honour to his head and heart.

Boswell Brought Back to Life

Charles Dickens to Wilkie Collins

Lord Warden Hotel, Dover,
Friday Evening, May 24, 1861.

My dear Wilkie,—I am delighted to receive so good an account of last night, and have no doubt that it was a thorough success. Now it is over, I may honestly say that I am glad you were (by your friendship) forced into the Innings, for there is no doubt that it is of immense importance to a public man in our way to have his wits at his tongue's end. Sir (as Dr. Johnson would have said), if

it be not irrational in a man to count his feathered bipeds before they are hatched, we will conjointly astonish them next year. *Boswell*: Sir, I hardly understand you. *Johnson*: Sir, you never understand anything. *Boswell* (in a sprightly manner): Perhaps, Sir, I am all the better for it. *Johnson* (savagely): Sir, I do not know but that you are. There is Lord Carlisle (smiling); he never understands anything, and yet the dog's well enough. Then, Sir, there is Forster; he understands many things, and yet the fellow is fretful. Again, Sir, there is Dickens, with a facile way with him—like Davy, Sir, like Davy—yet I am told that the man is lying at a hedge ale-house by the seashore in Kent, as long as they will trust him. *Boswell*: But there are no hedges by the sea in Kent, Sir. *Johnson*: And why not, Sir? *Boswell* (at a loss): I don't know Sir, unless— *Johnson* (thundering): Let us have no unlesses, Sir. If your father had never said "unless," he would never have begotten you, Sir. *Boswell* (yielding): Sir, that is very true.

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